

Gender and Caste issues in the western hills of Nepal

A Case of Arnakot Deurali Village in Baglung district

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Dedication

I dedicate this research paper to my late father Ram Prasad Paudyal who dreamed so much about my future and was so ambitious on my behalf. He supported me whole-heartedly throughout my school days and would have been absolutely delighted at how much I have achieved.

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List of Abbreviations

ADRWSSP	-	Arnakot Deurali Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project
CBOs	-	Community-Based Organisations
CFUC	-	Community Forest Users' Committee
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussion
I/NGOs	-	International/Non-Governmental Organisations
NRCS	-	Nepal Red Cross Society
PGNs	-	Practical Gender Needs
UF	-	Unica Foundation
VHL	-	Van Hall Larenstein
VDC	-	Village Development Committee
WUC	-	Water Users' Committee

Abstract

In Nepalese society gender and caste are long-standing and culturally ingrained issues, and it remains debatable whether the discrimination they create is either becoming less pronounced or is still unrelentingly persistent. Despite strong legal provision as well as governmental efforts to mitigate the gap of exclusion caused by these issues, discrimination and exclusion seem not to have declined. The objective of this research was to pin point the status of men and women in relation to their caste and gender in Arnakot Deurali village of Baglung district in western Nepal. This village was chosen for the study due to the Arnakot Deurali Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (ADRWSS) Project and the affiliation of Unica Foundation with this project as a donor. To fulfil the objective, a total of 20 respondents were interviewed in the village. Two focus group discussions were held with men and women groups and in-depth interviews conducted with eight key informants from the same locality. A meeting of the Water Users' Committee (WUC) was also observed.

The result of the study showed that the main roles of women in agriculture were planting, weeding and harvesting whilst the men's roles were ploughing, digging and other activities where physical strength was essential. In the household women were involved in cooking, cleaning and washing whilst men were milking cattle and taking care of them. At community level, both men and women were helping the neighbours when needed, such as organising feasts when the men did the cooking, not the women. Likewise, there was a stronghold of men in the Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) whilst women were less involved in such organisations and more compartmentalised within the mothers' groups. The situation of Dalit women was even more difficult; they were deprived from holding decisive positions within the mothers' groups although they constituted a significant number of membership.

There was access to resources for both men and women but control over these resources mainly fell in the men's domain, especially resources like land and buildings. Men were solely taking decisions even in the issues which directly concerned women, such as travelling and family planning as well as community issues like drinking water.

The prevalence of the caste system was quite reinforced causing discrimination through the notion of untouchability. Dalits had entry restrictions to non-Dalit households and Dalits felt discriminated against on many occasions. Experiences of being discriminated against due to caste were higher among Dalit women than their male counterparts.

To mitigate the gap created by gender and caste discrimination, an intervention strategy has to be developed whereby men, women, boys and girls from all caste groups would be equally involved. Work needs to be done to raise awareness in all spheres of society. There is a need for both men and women to come together to challenge gender discrimination which is pervasive among so-called Dalits and non-Dalits. Each activity in this regard should be in line with local and district level governmental plans. The development organisations that are active in the field should be gender- and caste-sensitive and should train the field-level staffs accordingly.

Key terms:

Gender roles, Access, Control, Decision Making, Mothers' Group, Caste, Dalit, Non-Dalit, Untouchability

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a background and rationale of the study as well as an introduction to the Unica Foundation and one of its on-going projects – the Arnakot Deurali Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (ADRWSS) Project. In addition, an outline is presented of the problem statement, research questions, research framework, and perspective of this research.

1.1 Background

Nepal is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual country. The national census of 2001 has identified 102 caste and ethnic communities and 92 languages and dialects in Nepal. These castes and communities are broadly divided into two major ethnic groups: the Indo-Aryan language speaking Caucasoid group and the Tibeto-Burman language speaking Mongoloid group. The former group belongs to the Hindu caste communities while the latter group belongs to the indigenous nationalities of Nepal. As per the national census of 2001, Brahmins and Chhetris constitute 30.9 per cent, indigenous peoples 37.2 per cent, Madhesis 14.8 per cent, Dalits 11.8 per cent and religious minorities and other unidentified groups 5.3 per cent of the total population of 2.27 million. On the basis of religion, 80 per cent of Nepal's total population is reported to be Hindu and 10 per cent Buddhist. The remaining 10 per cent is made up of Kirants, Muslims, Christians, Jains and other unidentified minority religious groups (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

The predominance of the Hindu population is due to the historical and long political dominance of a theocratic Hindu state. The peoples of the Hindu castes originated from the plains of India. They fled to Nepal in the early 12th and 13th centuries to escape the Muslim invasion in India (Gurung, 2010). Most indigenous peoples are of hill and mountain origin who settled in Nepal from Tibet a long time ago. Geographically, we find more indigenous people in the hills and mountains (25) than in Tarai (18), whereas we find more caste groups in the Tarai (41) than in the hills (9). We do not find any caste groups in the mountain region.

1.2 Rational of the Study

Since the uprising in 2006, Nepal is officially a secularized state, that is, no longer a Hindu state. However, the hierarchical structures built up through a centuries long living practices of the Hindu caste system remain. For example, Janajatis (indigenous people) do not have the same privileges and access to resources as the dominating high castes Brahmins and Chhetris. The Dalits, regarded as untouchables are ranked lowest in the caste order and are suppressed by those higher up. But not only low castes and ethnic minorities are excluded in Nepalese society; women also face exclusion because of their lower status and gender-based discrimination prevailing in civil and political affairs (Gurung, 2010).

Since 2006 there have been increasing demands for restructuring the state in order to address the aspirations of the people from different cultural, lingual, religious, gender as well as ethnical background. However, due to the deep-rooted hierarchical and suppressive structures within Nepalese society, it will take many constitutional, political and social changes over a long period of time to get closer to the goal of an inclusive society.

The issue of social inclusion and exclusion is becoming more pronounced in the development discourse. This can be seen in several studies, regarding the issues of exclusive societies, conducted and published by various national, international and

multilateral development agencies. The multifaceted nature of domination and suppression in different spheres of Nepalese society is portrayed by the World Bank (2006) as below:

Table 1: Dimensions of Exclusion in Nepal

<u>Social Category Status</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Caste</u>	<u>Ethnicity / Race</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Religion</u>	<u>Geo-political</u>
<u>Dominant</u>	Men / boys	Tagadhari: Brahman, Chhetri	Caucasoid	Nepali	Hindu	Parbatiya (Hill dweller)
<u>Subordinate</u>	Women/ girls	Dalit	Janajati / Mongoloid	Other	Non-Hindu	Madhesi (Plains dweller)

Source: World Bank (2006)

Over 200 forms of caste-based discrimination have been identified in Nepal. Discrimination is more entrenched in the country's less developed areas, especially in the mid-west and far-western regions, but caste continues to influence inter-personal behaviours throughout the country (World Bank, 2006).

As presented in Table 1, issues of exclusion are pervasive in different social categories in Nepal. However, the nature of exclusion is not linear but often intertwined with different social categories and forms a diverse type of subordination and domination. For instance, one gender category could be subordinated not only by another dominant gender category but also by other dominant caste categories and vice versa. Crenshaw (1991) has highlighted such phenomenon as the theory of intersectionality, which suggests and seeks to examine how various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic social inequality.

There have been many efforts from governmental as well as the non-governmental sector to mitigate inequalities based on gender and caste. There are about 200 INGOs and 30,000 plus NGOs working in the country (SWC, 2011) to ease governmental efforts in the development sectors. Furthermore, many community based organizations (CBOs) are also working on behalf of marginalized groups, trying to advocate for them and empower them in such a way, that they are able to participate actively in development processes.

1.3 Unica Foundation

Since 2007, the Unica Foundation (*Stichting Unica*), a Netherlands-based charity, has provided technical and financial support to development projects in Nepal, with the aim of creating sustainability, awareness and cooperation. It has completed 16 different projects in Nepal and is currently involved in six different projects. Despite being a relatively young player in the development field of Nepal, UF focuses on the sustainability of any activities it carries out and focuses on such aspects as education, hydropower plants, drinking water systems, biogas, solar power, improved cooking stoves etc. UF is not yet affiliated to the Nepalese government at the central level but works with local NGOs and CBOs at the grassroots level, which results in little physical presence in the country. However, the growing number of activities requires more attention on monitoring and evaluation as well

as coordination with different stakeholders. UF has recently decided that it needs a permanent setup in Nepal and will open a Kathmandu-based country office in November 2012 to coordinate¹ activities.

As UF becomes more involved in development activities in Nepal, it is experiencing different situations of gender and social inclusion. On many occasions, local partners also have no accurate information about the different dynamics of gender, caste, ethnicity, languages and their various implications in a project.

1.4 Arnakot Deurali Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project

The Arnakot Deurali Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (ADRWSS) Project is one of UF's on-going projects, initiated in March 2011. The Kaski chapter of the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) is the project's local implementing partner. The main activities of the project are to provide skill-based capacity promotional training on sanitation, health and hygiene, micro-credit, leadership and communication, literacy classes for the elderly, waste management and finally, the construction of a household latrine and water supply scheme. The targeted area is 191 households and two primary schools that constitute the total village population of 1200, with women outnumbering men (NRCS, 2010).

Arnakot Deurali is located on a high, isolated plateau in western Nepal. The hardworking community has eked out a living from the abundant plateau soils for generations, but life in the community is incredibly hard. Each day is a fight for clean water, food for the family and medicines and care for the sick and elderly. With such items in short supply, the average Arnakot resident does not live much beyond 60 years of age, and education is often inaccessible or financially not feasible. Arnakot Deurali is located 177 kilometres to the west of Pokhara, Nepal's second largest city. It sits on a 2100 metre-high plateau that is cut through by three large Himalayan rivers. The plateau looks out over Dhaulagiri Mountain, one of Nepal's "eight-thousanders". There are only 14 mountains in the world more than eight kilometres in height and Dhaulagiri is one of them (Arnakot Village Profile, 2012).

1.5 Problem Statement

Any project intervention would and will affect men and women differently as their roles, needs, challenges and opportunities often differ from one another. In addition, their social position and norms determine who has access to and control over certain resources and benefits at the individual, household as well as community level. To understand these dynamics, it is important to include both men and women and their overlaying gender issues in the study. Likewise, caste issues are equally important to take into consideration.

So far the actual status of men and women in the ADRWSS project scheme area had not been studied. Therefore, it was crucial to conduct a baseline study immediately and to look at whether and to what extent, men and women from Dalit and non-Dalit caste categories would potentially benefit from the proposed project in different ways. This study would give an indication as to whether the intended project activities corresponded with the needs of both men and women and what kind of adjustments would need to be made

¹It has been decided that I will be joining the office in Kathmandu as from November 2012.

in the stipulated plan. As the ADRWSS project is underway and UF realised the necessity of this study, I was commissioned to carry it out.

I would also be interested to return to the same community in five years' time to observe the impact of the project. I would be interested to analyse any changes in the status of the men and women involved especially regarding gender and caste issues.

1.6 Research Objective and Research Questions

Objective:

The objectives of this research was to examine the status of both men and women in Arnakot Deurali village in relation to the predominant gender issues and to scrutinise the stipulated activities of the ADRWSS project as to whether, and to what extent, the project meets the different needs of men and women from Dalit and non-Dalit caste groups in the village.

Main research question:

What is the current status of men and women with respect to prevailing gender and caste issues in the ADRWSS project scheme area at Arnakot Deurali village?

Sub questions:

- a) What are the gender roles of men and women in the village?
- b) What is the position of men and women regarding access to, and control over resources and benefits?
- c) How do men and women take part in decision making at individual, household and community level?
- d) To what extent does the issue of untouchability prevail in the village?

1.7 Research Framework

The framework of the research is structured in Table 2: a grey box indicating what sources of information were used to answer which sub-questions.

Table 2: Research Framework

Questions	Dimensions	Aspects	Sub-aspects	Source of information							
				Document review	Semi structured interview		Focus group discussion		Direct observation	Key informants' interview	
					♀	♂	♀	♂		♀	♂
SQ 1	Gender roles	Productive roles	Income generating activities								
		Reproductive roles	Household work								
		Community roles	Labour contribution								
			Group joining								
SQ 2	Access to and control over	Resources and benefits	Physical, Intangible, Credit programme, Education								
SQ 3	Decision-making	Various Levels	Individual								
			Household								
			Community								
SQ 4	Caste system	Prevalence of untouchability	Entry restriction, Deprivation								

SQ = Sub-question.

1.8 The Research Perspective

This research was conducted by reviewing the relevant literature and interviewing 20 persons - 10 women and 10 men - half from Dalit - and half from non-Dalit- households. Eight key informants were interviewed including a child club representative, a school teacher and a village leader as well as project staff at the location and in the Netherlands. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted in two separate groups, men and women. The men's group comprised 11 participants (six Dalits, five non-Dalits) and the women's group comprised seven participants, four of whom were Dalits. The direct observation method was applied to understand the decision-making process and the participation of the different castes and genders. A review of project documents and reports was carried out to understand the participation of the different gender and caste groups in the different Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) of the project area.

The project document of the ADRWSS project, the funding agreement between UF and NRCS, NRCS booklets and leaflets and a district profile of Baglung were studied, which helped to answer the sub-questions on community roles and access and control.

The assessment criteria were formulated by studying theories on gender roles, access to and control over as well as involvement of men and women in decision-making process. Literature on the caste system was also studied.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter gives a conceptual framework followed by the operational definitions which help to guide this study. It further illuminates issues of caste and gender with the help of contemporary literature on the Nepalese context.

Table 3: Conceptual Framework

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Aspects</i>	<i>Sub-aspects</i>	<i>Elements</i>
Status of men and women in relation to gender issues	Gender roles	Productive roles	Income generating activities	Paid job, Self-employment, Daily labour, Work on own farm
		Reproductive roles	Household work	Water fetching, Cooking, cleaning, childcare
		Community roles	Labour contribution in societal rituals and community work	Construction and cleaning of community pathways; Wedding and funeral rituals
			Involvement in groups at the community level	Involvement in groups and committees e.g. forest user's group, mothers' group, water users' group etc.
	Access to and control over	Resources	Physical	Land, building, livestock, money, jewellery
			Intangible	Information, Time
		Benefits	Credit programme	Accessing loans
			Education	Schooling
	Decision making	Individual level	Individual autonomy	Travelling
			Personal expense	Buying toiletries and cosmetics
		Household level	Crop selection, family planning	Type and species selection, Choosing contraceptives
	Community level	Decision making in Water User's Committee	Women's voice, Dalits' voice	
	Caste system	Prevalence of untouchability	Entry restriction, Deprivation	Access to wells, temples, <i>chautari</i> and <i>pati-pauwa</i> (resting places) and private houses; Eating and drinking together between Dalit and non-Dalits

2.1 Operational Definitions of Key Concepts

Gender

The term 'gender' began to be used in research in women's studies at the end of the 1970s as a result of the realization that concepts relating to female and male issues are largely social constructions and far from being solely biological phenomena.

Moor's definition (1988) supports this line of thought, defining gender as socially constructed allocating culturally variable roles that women and men play in their daily lives. It refers to the way people of different cultures allocate roles, responsibilities and status and relate to each other based on how they perceive and rationalize biological differences between men and women. The socio-cultural setting of people determines the gender relations within any environment. Gender is about behaviours, beliefs, norms, ideas and myths of being a man or woman.

Moser (1993) defines gender as the differences between women and men within the same household and within and between cultures that are socially and culturally constructed and change over time. These differences are reflected in roles, responsibilities, access to resources, constraints, opportunities, needs, perceptions, views, etc. held by both women and men. Thus, gender is not a synonym for women, but considers both women and men in their interdependent relations.

But why women are discussed more in gender studies is because women are more vulnerable in their gender relations when compared to men almost everywhere in the world. Still, gender refers to the differential social roles of men and women in a specific cultural context and to the power relationships that goes along with these roles.

A focus on gender not only reveals information about a woman's perceptions on her own position within the society, which otherwise can be hidden, but also deals with stereotypes of men and women, the values and qualities associated with each and the way power relations can change. 'If gender is about relations between men and women, then the male side of the equation must also be figured in. If women's gender identities are to be changed, then men's must change also' White in Macdonald (1993: 20) cited in Reeves and Baden (2000).

However, there are many theories about gender. I have used the theory of Caroline Moser since it clearly defines gender roles. In addition, she also makes a conceptual distinction on gender roles and needs, which will serve as the basis of this research on the status of men and women.

Gender roles

Gender roles determine how males and females should think, speak, dress, and interact within the context of society. Learning plays a role in this process of shaping gender roles. These gender schemas are deeply embedded cognitive frameworks regarding what defines masculine and feminine. While various socializing agents -parents, teachers, peers, movies, television, music, books, and religion -teach and reinforce gender roles throughout the lifespan, parents probably, exert the greatest influence, especially on their very young offspring.

Gender roles are 'socially determined', 'context specific', and 'changeable' but also resist change (Moser, 1993). They are socially determined since they are influenced by the values and norms in the society which sets the rules that people are expected to accept.

Given that gender roles and relations can change over time, it is important to carry out context-specific analysis as they may differ from place to place and from time to time. They may also resist change since there is status quo in the society which advocates maintaining the traditional gender roles.

World Food Programme (2001) defines gender roles by stating that, 'gender roles change over time, through individual choices or with social or political changes such as economic crises, natural disasters, emergencies and post war situations in which the decision-making power and responsibilities of women and men may change' which is also in line with Moser's definition.

Mentioned below are triple gender roles and relationships as explained by Moser (1993 :29), namely the productive, reproductive and community roles;

Productive roles

The productive role deals with the work undertaken by men and women in exchange for cash, in kind or sometimes for no pay at all. For example, women are involved in agriculture as farmers, peasant farmer's wives and wage earners. Women's productive work is often carried out alongside their domestic and childcare responsibilities (reproductive work) and tends to be less visible and less valued than men's productive work.

Reproductive roles

Women and girls are mainly responsible for this work which is usually unpaid although men's and boys' association in such roles cannot be completely neglected. These include all tasks undertaken to reproduce human capital such as cooking, washing clothes, cleaning, collecting water and fuel, caring for the sick and elderly. It also involves the bearing and caring of children and all the tasks associated with domestic work and the maintenance of all household members.

Community roles

Community roles are divided into two as community managing and community politics roles;

- ***Community managing roles***

The community managing roles are associated with the activities undertaken by men and women to provide for and maintain resources of collective consumption. Examples include building communal pathways, markets, schools, and clinics on a voluntary, unpaid basis. For women, this is seen as an 'extension of their reproductive role' since the nature of these roles is voluntary and conducted during 'free time'.

- ***Community politics roles***

The community politics roles are the political activities undertaken by men and women at community, local, national and sometimes international levels. These political activities are undertaken on behalf of customary structures, party politics and lobby advocacy groups. Since the nature of this work often deals with wage or increase in status or power, these roles are mostly undertaken by men.

Gender needs

Because the roles of men and women in societies are often different, their needs vary accordingly. Moser (1993 :39) makes the conceptual distinction between practical and strategic gender needs.

Practical Gender Needs (PGNs) are the immediate needs identified by women to assist their survival under their 'socially accepted roles', within 'existing power structures'. Policies to meet PGNs tend to focus on ensuring that women and their families have adequate living conditions, such as healthcare and food provision, access to safe water and sanitation, but also seek to ensure access to income generating opportunities. PGNs do not directly challenge the sources of gender inequalities, even though these needs may be a direct result of women's subordinate position in society.

Strategic Gender Needs (SGNs) are those needs identified by women that require strategies for challenging male dominance and privilege. These needs may relate to inequalities in the gender division of labour, in ownership and control of resources, in participation in decision-making process, or in mitigation of domestic and other sexual violence.

Gender relations

'Gender relations' is a common expression in many fields of research, yet it is hardly ever clearly defined in conceptual terms. It is therefore necessary to clarify the concept of 'gender relations' itself while discussing different forms of it. The concept should be suitable for critically investigating the structural role that genders play in social relations in their totality.

According to Reeves and Baden (2000), 'gender relations is a hierarchical relation of power between women and men that tend to disadvantage women. These gender hierarchies are often accepted as 'natural' but are socially determined relations, culturally based, and are subject to change over time. They can be seen in a range of gendered practices, such as the division of labour and resources, and gendered ideologies, such as ideas of acceptable behaviour for women and men.'

'Gender relations are revealed not only in the division of labour and resources between women and men, but also in ideas and representations -the ascribing to women and men of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behaviour patterns, and so on' Agrawal (1997).

'No field can be investigated meaningfully without complementary research into the ways in which gender relations shape and are shaped' (Haug, n.d.).

Access and Control

Productive, reproductive and community roles require the use of resources. In general, women and men have different levels of both access (the opportunity to make use of something) to the resources needed for their work, and control (the ability to define its use and impose that definition on others) over those resources.

Resources

Resources can be economic: such as land or equipment; political: such as representation, leadership and legal structures; social: such as childcare, family planning, education; and also time - a critical but often scarce resource.

Decision Making

Decision making is the process of selecting products or ideas from several choices, and taking action.

Community

Communities are not only a place or setting, or a district or city that people live in, but more. They are more of how we live and socialise with others. We have our own personal communities, the communities that we are a part of and the communities that we associate with. Cohen says that 'community' involves two related suggestions that the members of a group have something in common with each other; and the thing held in common distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other possible groups (Cohen 1985: 12). Lee and Newby (1983: 57) point out; the fact that people live close to one another does not necessarily mean that they have much to do with each other. There may be little interaction between neighbours. It is the nature of the relationships between people and the social networks of which they are a part that is often seen as one of the more significant aspects of 'community'.

Communities are the building blocks that allow us to make sense of the world, in which we live, participate and share experiences. They provide a sense of identity and purpose, a sense of being a part of and belonging. To put it simply, society could be best described as the way we do things, and, community is who we do those things with.

Household

The household is the unit of analysis in this study. Ruide (1995: 228) describe a household as 'a co-residential unit, usually family-based in some way, which takes care of resource management and primary needs of its members'. According to Pennartz and Niehof (1999: 2) households are frequently defined in censuses as 'spatial units where members live in the same dwelling and share basic domestic and/or reproductive activities such as cooking and eating'.

Dalit

The term 'Dalit' has different meanings for different people. The most common use of the term is to define people who were once known as 'untouchables', separated from the rest of society by the caste system. The principals of untouchability and 'purity and pollution' dictate what Dalits are and are not allowed to do; where they are and are not allowed to live, go, or sit; who they can and cannot give water to, eat with, or marry; extending into the minutiae of all aspects of daily life (Navsarjan, 2009).

However, the Nepal Government, international aid agencies and academics use many terms to refer to Dalits. Bhattachan et al. (2009) categorises some terms, such as *aspaninachalne* (water polluting), *acchoot* (untouchables), *doom*, *pariganit*, and *tallo jat* (low caste) as derogatory, while other terms, such as *suppechhit* (ignored), *utpidit* (oppressed), *sosit* (exploited), *pacchadi pareka* (lagging behind), *bipanna* (downtrodden), *garib* (poor), *nimukha* (helpless), *simantakrit* (marginalised), *subidhabata banchit*

(disadvantaged), *alpasankhyak* (minorities), *banchitikaranma pareka* (excluded), *harijan* (god's people) as non-derogatory. However, one could differ with this since many terms categorised as non-derogatory, still echo as derogatory.

2.2 The Caste System in Nepal

The caste system is known as one of the oldest surviving social hierarchies in the world. The caste system permeates, to varying degrees, all major religions in the Indian subcontinent and orders persons into caste categories on the basis of ritual purity (CHRGJ, 2005). The caste system in Nepal has its roots in traditional Hindu mythology which categorises all people into one of four levels of the caste structure. The system is based on degrees of purity and pollution with the lowest ranks being considered 'untouchable' (Dahal, 2002). The notion of untouchability refrain Dalits to live a dignified life as they are often prevented from getting access to public services, such as hotel, restaurant as well as community resources, e.g. well, water tap, resting places, temple etc.

The traditional hierarchy places Brahmins (priests and teachers) at the top, followed by Chhetris (rulers and soldiers) and Vaisyas (merchants and traders). Dalits or 'untouchables' (labourers, cobblers, and manual scavengers) occupy the lowest position within the caste hierarchy. One's caste is determined by one's birth into a particular social group. It is therefore not possible to change one's caste or move between caste categories. Caste divisions are preserved and reinforced through the practice and threat of social ostracism or physical violence. Because one's caste can be determinative of one's occupation, caste discrimination is also referred to as discrimination on the basis of 'work and descent.' Dalits are typically restricted to tasks and occupations that are deemed too 'dirty' or 'polluting' for 'upper-caste' communities (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

Caste rank is hereditary and maintained through intermarriage restrictions; it relies on economic interdependence and dictates livelihood occupation, with the high castes playing the roles of rulers, priests and advisors and lower castes taking on menial tasks (Action Aid Nepal, 2005).

2.3 Gender Inequality in Nepal

Men and women always comprise the two halves of the population in every society. However, the rights and opportunities accorded to women have never been on a par with the rights and opportunities accorded to men of the said societies. These differences in the opportunities of life found between men and women have forced women in many contexts to bear a subordinate position. This can be seen in a number of sectors, namely the economic, political, social and cultural life of each society.

Gender-based discrimination is widespread and deep-rooted in Nepalese society amongst almost all the various caste and ethnic groups. UNDP (2004) shows that the country has one of the highest indices of son-preference in the world as patriarchy pervades most of Nepal's castes and ethnic groups. In addition, Nepal's historically evolved patriarchal tradition and caste-based social structure does not allow women to come to the decision-making level, which indirectly affects the country's economy. This in turn also affects the country's development. As the voice of half the population is unheard they are still living harder lives in the rural areas, facing gender discrimination and exploitation. Women are excluded from society both as beneficiaries and contributors. They have been deprived of most of the opportunities including access to business, trade and industry, gainful employment, entrepreneurial and skill development opportunities, education, health etc.

They are discriminated even by the laws of the land on many matters. This discrimination begins from their early childhood socialisation from the household level where the preference for a male child is still strong due to a religiously ingrained attitude.

2.4 The Double Burden of Caste and Gender Discrimination

Dalit women and girls in Nepal endure the double burden of caste and gender discrimination. Dalit women lag far behind Dalit men and 'upper-caste' women in terms of healthcare, education and remuneration for their labour. Dalit women also bear the brunt of exploitation and violence in the country and are largely perceived as being 'sexually available' to 'upper-caste' men. As a means of crushing political dissent, Dalit women are targeted with impunity by landlords, the police and the army. Economic vulnerability including widespread debt bondage, has also forced Dalit women into prostitution, exposing them to sexual violence and the ensuing health risks.

Literacy rate for Dalit women is 12 per cent, which is substantially below the national literacy rates for women in Nepal (National Planning Commission, 2002). The health of Dalit women is considerably compromised by high maternal mortality rates, malnutrition, and poor healthcare associated with extreme poverty. The average life expectancy for a Dalit woman is five years lower than the corresponding average for a non-Dalit woman (CHRGJ, 2005).

Caste and gender-based discrimination as a consequence of exclusion is widespread around the country but the nature, form and intensity vary from one place to another. This is despite the promises that came with democracy, that human rights would be respected to the fullest extent. Even now the high caste dominant people from many areas favour discrimination (mainly untouchability) despite being aware of the law against it.

In attempting to understand how gender and caste hierarchy are intertwined, we need to be aware that these are not always direct correspondences. Much less gender hierarchy exists at the lower levels of caste hierarchy than at the top, and not strictly for reasons of impurity (Cameron, 1998). Most subordinate groups of people feel that the dominant and privileged groups of people are not only responsible but are key players in discrimination and exclusion in entering temples and accessing services, socio-economic opportunities and resources.

2.5 Governmental Efforts

The inclusion/exclusion debate has now pervaded both the official and development policy discourse in Nepal. Inclusion as an official policy made inroads into government policy after inclusion was incorporated as one of the four pillars of Nepal's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in 2003, which is also Nepal's Tenth Plan. Contemporarily, inclusion, state restructuring, proportionate representations, federalism are the recurring themes in today's public discourse in Nepal. But achieving this ambitious goal needs a fundamental shift not only in structure, governance and access to opportunities but also in underlying hierarchical norms, values and behaviour. The subordinate groups of people are further excluded legally due to the failure in effective enforcement of law; nevertheless the law prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, caste and tribes.

The Government has continued concentrating on inclusion since it first addressed the issue in its eighth five-year plan (1992-1997). In the three-year interim plan (2007-2010), inclusion had a separate chapter and 'addressed not only the issues of gender, Dalit and tribes but also Madhesis and the Muslim minority' (National Planning Commission, 2008).

Collective intervention through the formation of community groups has proved to be effective at addressing issues of exclusion. But the success is limited to selected areas and has failed to be sustained due to a lack of political will, strong commitment and a lack of proper support mechanisms at all levels. Furthermore, the positive outcome of such successful interventions are rarely identified, nor systematically institutionalised into society.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design adopted. It also gives an overview of the study area, approach, data set and type, and the procedures of data collection, culminating in a methodological discussion which consists of the researcher’s own feelings, opinions and intuitions as part of a reflective journal.

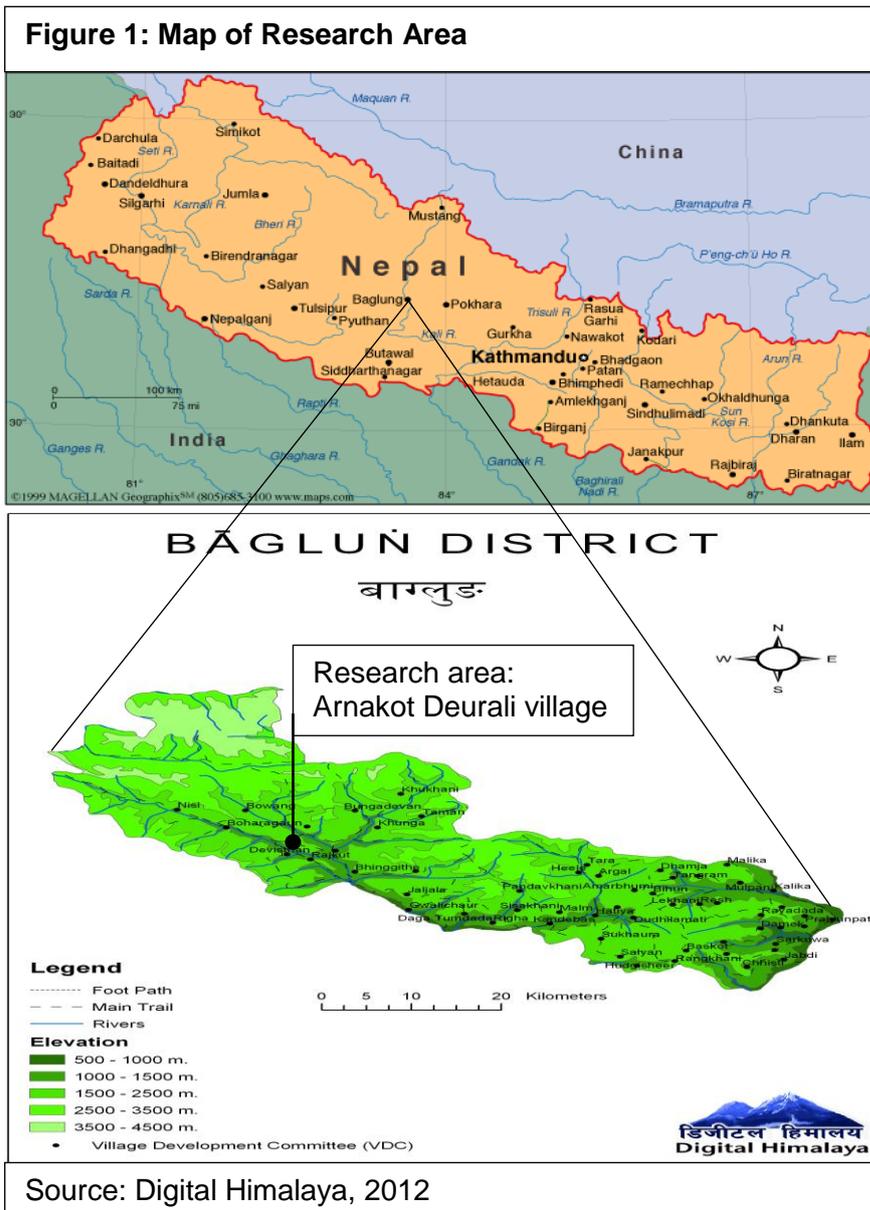
3.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in the project scheme area of Arnakot Deurali Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (ADRWSS) Project which lies in Devasthan and Bobang VDC of

Baglung district, one of the 75 districts in Nepal. Baglung district has one municipality and 59 VDCs. Arnakot Deurali is the name of the village in Devasthan VDC, Ward no. 8.

The population of the project area is about 1200 with women outnumbering men and includes 191 households and two primary schools. Of this number, 92 households are Dalit with a population of 600 (NRCS, 2010).

Arnakot Deurali is located about 145 miles the west of the Kathmandu valley, the capital city of Nepal. The altitude of the village is about 2100 meters. One way to reach it is by air from Kathmandu to Pokhara (half an



hour), then by vehicle from Pokhara to Baglung Bazaar (four hours). Depending on the time of the year, the journey through the district, by vehicle and on foot, can take up to 11 hours (6-7 hours in the dry season). The final climb on foot up to the village takes about four hours.

The livelihood system mainly depends on subsistence agriculture, which includes farming and raising animals. The main crops cultivated are millet, corn, wheat, barley, buckwheat and mustard, while buffalos, cows, oxen, goats and chicken are raised in the village. The plateau is too high and too dry for rice cultivation. For this reason, rice has always been seen as a luxury item saved for consumption at festival time (Annex V offers some of images on the landscape and life of the village).

The main reason for selecting this area for study is due to the ADRWSS project which is located here. Unica Foundation (UF) is quite keen on my study in this area. It might be helpful for the UF to adjust the activities of the project based on the findings of the research and would be a reference to design new projects in the future for the same settlement. This area has a mixed settlement of Dalit - and non-Dalit households unlike most villages in Nepal where Dalit households are only a few. In addition, no such studies have been conducted in the area before now concerning people's status relating to gender and caste.

3.2 Study Approach and Sampling Methods

The study was conducted in a qualitative way through desk study and case study. In the desk study relevant literature was reviewed while the case study aimed at giving empirical information on the caste and gender issues in the research area. Due to the nature of the research, a qualitative approach was adopted as it was deemed effective in gaining culturally specific information on the persistence of caste and gender discrimination based on community values, opinions, beliefs, experience and prevailing social interactions.

For the data set both primary and secondary data were used. The primary data were collected from individual interviewing, focus group discussion, direct observation and information from the key informants. Secondary data were gathered from specialised journals, scientific books, national statistics and some unpublished reports from NRCS. The data included basic information on gender roles, access to and control over resources, decision-making process and status of caste differences. The primary respondents shared their own experiences and ideas on those gender and caste issues. Methodological triangulation was applied using more than one method to gather data. Multiple methods for data collection were used with the intention of overcoming the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that would come from using one single method.

For a qualitative study at household level, 20 primary respondents were selected, applying quota under the nonprobability sampling method; comprising caste and gender category in equal numbers. Also for the FGD, it was planned to make a quota with an equal number of Dalit and non-Dalit. But the original plan had to be slightly adapted as men's group appeared to have 11 participants including six Dalits and women's group had seven participants including four Dalits. The FGD participants were not the same as those who participated in the individual interview. Further, eight key informants were selected from different social responsibilities such as; a school teacher, a representative of the child club, a member of the school management committee, project staff, donor's representative, representative from water users' committee and radio presenter of the programme called Dalit Awaz (Voice of Dalit). Finally, I observed a meeting of the Water Users' Committee as a nonparticipant observer, where 12 people were present (See figure 7). In this way, I established interaction with 58 people in total for this research.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

I had already developed an interview checklist (see Annex I) in Wageningen before my field trip, and had conducted a pilot interview with the aid of a fellow Nepalese student. However, I decided to conduct two more pilot interviews once I arrived in the village: one man and one woman. It was worth doing as I could adjust my checklist in some places.

Figure 2: Moments of Individual Interview



Picture of one of the interviews being held in the attic of a cattle-hut (left) and respondent is listening to his own voice in the recorder afterwards

At the end of each interview, I asked the participants if they would like to add anything. I also asked if they would like to listen to recorded answers and two people did listen to the whole recording. The individual interviews lasted 40 minutes to one hour (more pictures from the data collection is presented in Annex V).

The focus group discussions were organised at the school hall. I moderated both the men's and women's sessions. I presented

preliminary findings from the individual interviews and asked their opinions. Each group discussion lasted 45 minutes.

The key informants' interviews were done in-depth in the subject matter depending on the background of the informant. The time taken by each informant varied from 10 to 40 minutes.

I observed the meeting of the Water Users' Committee as a non-participant observer. The meeting was held in the community building. Seven members and five from the advisory board were present. The observation lasted 25 minutes.

The data were analysed by clustering the qualitative data and describing the findings by supporting them with other research findings. The finding from the respondent and key informants was analysed by the abstraction of collected information and presented in a short descriptive way and in tabulations and figures. Sometimes simple calculations were done. The result was analysed and interpreted in comparison with other findings from literatures (A sample of raw transcripts is shown in Annex IV).

3.4 Limitations of the Study

There are some methodological limitations associated with this study. The major limitation was associated with the season in which the fieldwork was carried out. Since it was the season to bring the cows, oxen and buffalos to the pastures in the highlands, many villagers were temporarily absent from the village while others were also busy making preparations to leave. It made it quite difficult to make appointment. As a remedy, I used a convenience sample under non-probability sampling which might lead to an inaccurate representation of some larger group or population, such as; three (one man and two women) respondents from the Dalit caste group, were linked by polygamous marriages as the man was a polygamist and the two women had a co-wife each. However, it indicates a trend to have more such cases among the Dalit caste group; I am unable to make a statement without making a thorough investigation of the non-Dalit caste group as well.

There was a clear paucity of time that I spent with each of the respondents. It would have been better if I had visited respondents several times on different days and observed his or her activities, such as who is involved in which tasks in the household or in the agricultural field as well as contributing labour in the community work.

During the individual interviews, interference from children or other family members was experienced in many cases. Due to the indispensable nature of the joint family, it was hardly possible to segregate the participant from family interference.

As far as the key informants' interviews were concerned, an attempt to strike a balance between Dalits and non-Dalits as well as between male and female gender was not successful. This could have further illuminated the issues under research.

Besides the above-mentioned limitations, as a researcher I found it important to discuss the stages I came across as well as the incidents I encountered during the entire research period and to take note of the practical and logistical experiences, but also of intuitions, feelings and opinions that guided me at each stage.

The time I spent in the village was special in that I learned many new things, such as the names of local herbs I did not know. Even though we shared the same Nepali language as a means of communication, there were some words which I was not familiar with as these words were typical of the hill regions in the western part of Nepal.

I had many uncertainties in my mind about my research population and myself as a researcher. I had chosen the topic 'gender' and 'caste', but I myself belong to the male gender and the higher caste group (Brahmins). I was curious as to how the women and Dalit people in the village would respond to me. Would they even be willing to talk to me and share their personal experiences, would they find this comfortable? On the other hand I was thinking about myself, being a Hindu, being a male, being a Brahmin - and coming from a more or less similar type of hilly area of Nepal, I certainly had and have many preconceptions on the issues I was going to research. This would be my real challenge to recognise those preconceptions and to be self-critical enough to maintain the objectivity of the research.

3.5 Openness and Reliability

In spite of my doubt, the people were quite open and frank towards an outsider like me. They used many proverbs and their own perceptions on certain issues, which explained so much about the topic I was investigating. At one point I was interviewing a Dalit man and we were discussing the access and control of resources, when he cited his father as follows:

'Srimatilai bhed nadinu, lekh chareko gai nakinnu' (do not open your secrets to your wife, do not buy an upland-grazed cow)

Likewise, one non-Dalit woman told me why caste mattered a lot to her. She stated as follows:

'I hate the Dalits because they eat the meat of dead cattle and they are dirty.'

These are two extreme examples of how people shared their views with me, and it seems evident that they felt free to voice their own opinions.

Beside this, I felt that they wanted to give me 'right' answers so they were positioning themselves formally, in the way they talked, in the way they dressed during our one-on-one interviews. Once I realised this, I used to stop my recorder and keep our conversation going. In addition, I had on purpose chosen informal settings to our conversations to make them feel comfortable and it worked quite well. The situation was different during the focus group discussion; people were expressing their views bluntly and the discussion was lively since the participants were at ease and even making jokes (I have included full account of my personal diary in the Annex III).

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter presents the data gathered from different sources as indicated in the research framework (Table 2).

4.1 Basic Information about the Respondents

As gender and caste were the focus of the study, primary data respondents were women, and men from Dalit- and non-Dalit- caste groups.

Table 4: List of Respondents from the Individual Interview

	Women	Men	Total
Dalits	5	5	10
Non-Dalits	5	5	10
Total	10	10	20

Table 5: Age Range of the Respondents

Category	Age range of the Respondents					Average Age
	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	
Dalit Women	2	2	1	0	0	35
Non-Dalit Women	1	1	2	1	0	38
Dalit Men	1	0	1	2	1	51
Non-Dalit Men	1	1	0	2	1	47
Total	5	4	4	5	2	

All respondents were married. Cases of polygamous marriages also came out as one male respondent from the Dalit category had two wives and two female respondents of the same category both had co-wives. All respondents had a basic literacy skill in Nepali language which allows them to read and write their name although none of the respondents had completed their high school.

There were two focus group discussions conducted, comprising a men's group and a women's group.

Table 6: List of Participants in Focus Group Discussion

	Dalits	Non-Dalits	Total
Women's group	4	3	7
Men's group	6	5	11
Total			18

Table 7: List of Key Informants

S.No.	Organisations / Involvement	Designation	Gender	Caste
1	Namuna Deurali Children's Club	Vice-president	F	Dalit
2	Arnakot Primary School	Teacher	F	Dalit
3	School Management Committee,	Member	M	Non-Dalit
4	Dhorpatan FM 104.1	Programme Presenter	M	Dalit
5	Arnakot Primary School	Headmaster	M	Non-Dalit
6	Chairperson	Water User Committee	M	Non-Dalit
7	Nepal Red Cross Society, Kaski	Project Coordinator	M	Non-Dalit
8	Unica Foundation	Project Manager	M	n/a. (Dutch)

4.2 Gender Roles

4.2.1 Productive Roles

Out of 20 individual respondents, 19 stated that agriculture (farming and animal rearing) was their main occupation inherited from their ancestors. One Dalit man reported that he was working as a *Katuwa*²; and gets a certain quantity of crops from each household as remuneration every year.

The average land size of the respondents was less than 0.5 hectares and their farming were based on subsistence. However, the yield was low and insubstantial for most of them to feed the household throughout the year. Among the 19 respondents who stated their occupation as agriculture, only three of them (two non-Dalit men and one non-Dalit woman) said that their own yield was sufficient to feed the household throughout the year. For the rest, they looked for some alternatives to earn doing menial labour in the village or migrating to foreign countries.

Five women respondents (including two Dalit) and one non-Dalit man respondent stated that at least one male member from their family was abroad for employment at the moment and that the household expenses were supported by that person. Three men (two non-Dalits, one Dalit) respondents indicated that they came back to the village

²Katuwal works as messenger in the village. Villagers have provided him with a drum made from leather and wood called *Damaha*; by playing this drum he draws the attention of the villagers even from a distance and shout a message about community meetings, labour contribution etc. Bhattarai and Prajapati (2010) states, 'due to the geographical difficulty, illiteracy, backward community and other difficulties- in the country, Katuwal were more effective than other modern media to disseminate information past and this practice is still in existence in some rural parts of Nepal'.

recently from foreign employment and might go there again. It is learnt during the interview that men from the Dalit community had chosen more to go to the Indian states whereas men from the non-Dalit community went to Malaysia, Dubai, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. No cases of women seeking foreign employment were recorded during the interviews.

Men and women both perform different roles in the farm. All women (five Dalits, five non-Dalits) stated their productive roles in agriculture as making seedbeds, planting, weeding and harvesting. One of the non-Dalit women put it as follows:

I work in my own field during the day time. I grow corn and millet mainly. Own agricultural production is sufficient for six months to feed me and my two sons. For the rest of the period, I buy food from the money sent by my husband who has been working in Malaysia for two years. As agriculture could not keep us busy throughout the year and did not fulfil our food requirement, he decided to go there for menial labour work.

As my field is not that big, I do not have to go and work there every day. I have a buffalo so I have to collect grass, clean the cowshed, and milk etc. Since my husband is not here I do have difficulty in repairing the roof of the hut as well as the house; I have to seek help from the men in my neighbourhood as women cannot do this job. Besides, it is difficult to manage the entire work in the field alone. When my husband was here, he used to do the heavy work such as digging and ploughing and I would do the planting, weeding and harvesting.

Nine men (including four Dalits and five non-Dalits) stated their role in agriculture, which included farm and animal husbandry, as where physical strength and mobility is more involved. A Dalit male-respondent mentioned about men's and women's roles in agriculture as follows:

I work in my field where I grow corn and potatoes. I get assistance from my wife in the agricultural work; she mainly makes seedbeds, plants and weeds. I do digging and ploughing. Once I have free time from the field, I make baskets and mats from bamboo and sell them in the village. I also grow vegetables and bring them in Burtibang to sell.

When the preliminary findings on men's and women's roles in agriculture were presented in the focus group discussion, participants agreed and further discussed why such role differences take place. Many of them thought it was due to the physical strength of the men. One of the Dalit participants from the men's group suggested as follows:

I think it is obvious to have different roles for men and women because men are stronger than women. Women cannot do the job of lifting heavy weights, ploughing etc. which requires lot of energy and I think only men have that.

In the women's focus group, they discussed that one of the probable reasons of such role division could be the wage. One non-Dalit women stated as follows:

Men are the heads of the family in our society, that's why it is their responsibility to carry out the heavy jobs. As they have to look after the whole family not only themselves they have to earn more. They can only earn more when they do tough jobs. For instance, in our village a man earns 300 rupees per day whereas we women earn 100 rupees only when we do labouring.

Another non-Dalit participant from the women's group slightly differed about the idea of earning. She mentioned that men do not necessarily earn more just because they do heavy work. Society regards men more highly so they get paid more. She responded as follows:

I can understand with some tasks why men only get involved, such as the task where physical strength is vital, to lift heavy loads etc. and they get paid more accordingly compared to women. But when we work together with men, for example, carrying manure to the field, we all have the same size bamboo basket and we all lift the same weight, still women get less paid, I don't get it. So, in my opinion there is not only the factor of physical strength and weakness, for men to get paid more than women.

4.2.2 Reproductive Roles

15 respondents (including 10 women, two non-Dalit men and three Dalit men) stated that women do cooking, washing and cleaning. The rest of the five (including three non-Dalit men and two Dalit men) informed that cooking is done by both, men and women. One of the women respondents stated as follows:

I sweep in morning, and clean the floor of the house with cow dung. Then I make a fire, prepare soup for the cattle, and make tea for the children and my husband. My husband gets out of bed and goes to the buffaloshed to clear out the dung, milk the buffalos and feed them grass. After this I and my husband go to collect grass together. My husband likes to collect the taller grass which is easy to collect, but I believe the offshoot grass is nutritious for cattle so that they produce more milk. When we collect tree leaves, my husband climbs in the tree and chops them off; I collect them on the ground. I am too scared to climb the tree, so I don't do it. When I am back from grass collecting, I have to start cooking and preparing children to go to school. In the daytime, if I am at home and not going to the field or working for someone, I wash clothes and clean around the house.

Two male respondents from the non-Dalit category said that men cook only if women are in their menstrual period. Regarding the household work and men's involvement in such work, one of the non-Dalit men respondents informed as follows:

When I am at home, I am busy with the cattle most of the time, I check if they are all doing fine. I clean up their dung, I give them grass and water, I milk them, I check if their damlo³ and stall is in good condition, sometimes they are clever and break it. And, my wife and I go to collect the grass as well. Regarding cooking, I know I can cook when needed, but I am not as good a cook as my wife (smile), so I better let her do it, except when she has her menstrual period.

When the respondents were asked about water fetching and firewood collection and who is involving in this task, four Dalit and two non-Dalit women answered that they fetch water mostly. One Dalit and three non-Dalit women stated that it is done by both genders. Regarding the firewood collection, all women (five Dalit, five non-Dalit) stated both spouses are involved in it. One Dalit woman informed about these reproductive roles as follows:

³String to tie to keep animals in the stall

My husband goes more for the firewood collection as he is good in using the axe, I am not. Still I assist him to carry the firewood home once it is dry. We often get the firewood from the community forest and sometimes we cut down the tree from our private land for this purpose. Regarding the water fetching, I guess you [she was pointing at me] might know by now we have a real big problem of drinking water, and we are waiting for Unica and Red Cross to bring the motor soon and pump the water to ease our life⁴ (laugh). For now, I go to fetch the water most of the time which takes about 45 minutes; my husband also does that sometimes.

Five Dalit and three non-Dalit men answered that both spouses are involved equally in water fetching and firewood collecting. Two non-Dalit men informed that they do more of these tasks. One of them stated as follows:

I do firewood collection and water fetching for my home basically for two reasons. The one, when I do this work, my wife could have time to do some other household work such as cooking and cleaning. And second reason, as we have to travel long to fetch water, I could bring double vessels of water at once. But for my wife, this would be difficult.

While the abovementioned findings were presented in the focus group discussions, people largely agreed on it. One of the Dalit participants from men's group stated:

I can agree that cooking, washing and cleaning tasks are mostly women's work. However, for fetching water and collecting firewood, it depends upon the distance needed to travel to perform such tasks. I have seen some cases in the village that women have medical condition and are not able to carry heavy loads for long time, so men are performing these tasks. And, what I would like to add to the men's task is that when we bring our cattle to the highland pastures we have to work really hard, and carry all the stuff to construct the temporary huts.

One of the non-Dalit participants from the women's group mentioned that there are more tasks that women are performing at the household:

While someone is ill at home, we are more involved in taking care of that person however; men are involved if the patient needs to be brought to the health centre in Burtibang⁵ on a stretcher. I think we are better at taking care of children as well. When children are ill at home, the father might sleep as normal but we, mothers, are worried and stay awake all night (laugh).

⁴Drinking water scheme is one of the vital schemes under ADRWSS project. As there are no natural water sources higher up in the village, the idea is to pump the water from the source situated in the lower altitude up to 368 meter vertical height (few kilometres on the ground length) and distribute it to 191 households. The Singapore-made pumps had not yet arrived due to road damage because of the rainy season. Many people are amused by this idea and are curiously looking forward to seeing how this works. As such this technique is not so common in Nepal; I found many people in the village were really curious .

⁵Burtibang is the central hub for 20 VDCs of western Baglung, it takes about 3 hours to reach there from this village by foot. There is a government health post run by paramedics at the moment. And, a new 15-bed hospital is under construction.

4.2.3 Community Roles

Two types of community roles were discussed: community managing roles and community politics roles. Under the community managing roles, there were mainly two themes which were discussed with the respondents; making pathways in the village and helping the neighbours during rituals. Under the community politics roles, a project document was studied, which outlined the men's and women's involvement in the community spheres, such as participation in the executive committee of CBOs in the village.

Community Managing Roles

Making and cleaning pathways in the village

All the respondents said that there are many activities in the community performed by the villagers voluntarily and that there are different socially and culturally given roles for both men and women.

Regarding making and clearing the pathways in the village, a Dalit woman mentioned that the women's role was chopping off bushes, removing small stones from the pathways and cleaning. She stated as follows:

We clear pathways surrounding the village, especially after the monsoon and right before Dashain⁶. That is the high time for the people to be back home if they are somewhere, so clearing pathways is necessary. If I take part on behalf of my home, I take a sickle and a spade with me. I chop off the bushes with the sickle and remove weeds and break up the surface of the ground using a spade.

There are many men also involved in clearing the pathways. Their tasks are mostly bricklaying and removing and breaking up the bigger stones.

All the rest of the women respondents' (five non-Dalits and four Dalits) answers were in line with the above mentioned statement. And, once this finding was presented in the women's focus group, the participants seemed supportive with this result as well.

A non-Dalit male respondent mentioned about the villagers involvement in clearing the pathways and the different roles they all had. He put forward his concerns about the children's involvement in the future and the fact that children and women would outnumber the men working on the pathways, which would lead to the heavy jobs being incomplete. He states as follows:

When I work on clearing pathways, I work with my fellow men. We do mainly repairing and building walls where needed. Sometimes we have to remove bigger

⁶Dashain is the 15-day national (religious) festival of Nepal; it is the longest and the most auspicious festival in the Nepalese annual calendar, celebrated by Nepalese of all castes throughout the globe. The festival falls around September–October, starting from the bright lunar fortnight and ending on the day of full moon.

stones caused by landslides. We basically use a crowbar, hammer, chisel, shovel and pick-axe as tools.

There are women and children also involved from different households. They do the light work since we men do the heavy stuff. I like women and children taking part in such activity, but we have a problem if there are less men and more women or children for this work. It is often noticed that households prefer to send women or children as this is unpaid work and what matters is head-count. Therefore, I think the community leader has to be stricter to arrange such work, so that there is balanced representation.

The men's group highlighted the growing number of children taking part in the activities. One non-Dalit men stated in the discussion as follows:

I find it quite risky to let the children do this sort of work; they might get injured when they play with tools. So, we, parents have to think of them and should work ourselves instead of sending the kids.

One of the Dalit participants of the women's group emphasised the utilization of the available manpower. She mentioned as follows:

I do see the point of balancing men and women for such community work to some extent. But I cannot offer male labour from my home as my husband is abroad. In such a situation, the community just has to accept the reality and let the women do what they can. Anyway, I don't think women's contribution is less.

Offering help to the neighbours during the societal rituals

The contribution of labour where societal rituals are concerned, specially offering help to neighbours when funeral and wedding rituals are taking place, was another element of community managing roles.

All respondents stated that it is traditional to offer help to their neighbours while performing rituals, in good times or bad.

One of the non-Dalit male respondents explained about the wedding ceremony:

In the wedding ceremony, the groom goes to the bride's home and brings her either the same day or the next day to his home. The male neighbours join the groom whereas the women neighbours wait and prepare to welcome the bride; in the meantime women also perform singing and dancing.

One of the Dalit female respondents stated about the wedding in the Dalit community:

Basically we do the same as the higher caste people do for a wedding, then our guests will mainly be from our own caste group. However, there is a trend nowadays that some of the high caste people also gradually join in our ceremonies, all of them won't join in of course. In the Dalit community, there are fewer wedding ceremonies happening as marriage by elopement are getting popular nowadays (laugh), which is less expensive of course.

Regarding the funeral rituals, a male Dalit respondent stated as follows:

If there is a death in the neighbourhood, men would carry firewood and take the body to the river and women would put the clothes and bedding of the deceased on the fire as well as clean the house.

There are people from the high caste who join in the funeral rituals in our caste group as well, but some of them are reluctant to eat with us. And, if we have to join such rituals in the high community, we do support by doing outside chores because we are not allowed to enter in their homes.

The above-mentioned results on rituals were presented in the focus groups and the groups agreed with the individual respondents.

In both of the rituals mentioned above, there is a common aspect that people have to organise feasts on a certain day of the rituals. When it was asked about men's and women's roles in organising feasts, one of the non-Dalit female respondents stated the following:

When we have to help the neighbours by organising feasts, the women's tasks are cleaning houses, cleaning dishes, fetching water while the men do the cooking, fixing tents, arranging chairs etc.

One non-Dalit male respondent explained why cooking is in the men's domain in such feasts as follows:

This is not like cooking at home for a few people, there might be hundreds of people and you have to be able to handle the big cooking pans and lift up the heavy loads which would simply be too difficult for women to do. That is may be the reason, we, men cook on such occasions.

When the above information was discussed in the men's and women's focus group there was largely an agreement about this fact.

Community Political Roles

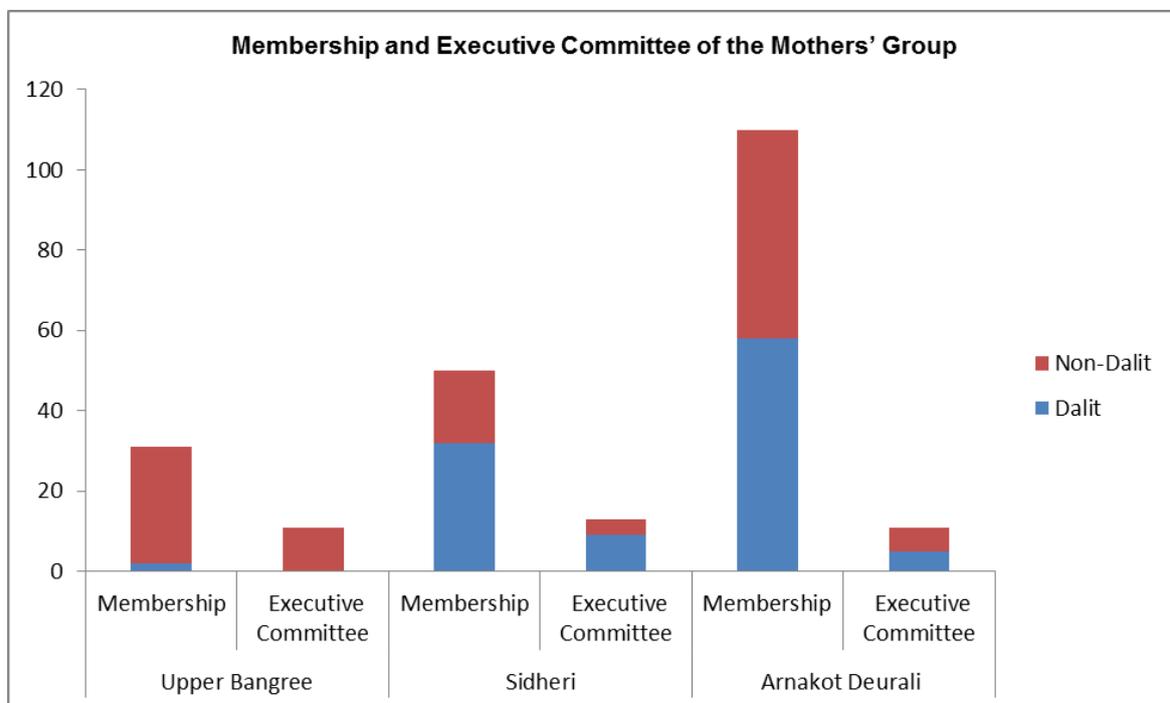
To understand the community political roles, participation in the executive committee of CBOs was taken as a key indicator and for this purpose the project document and reports were studied. A few questions were asked of the key informants to illuminate the issue when the reports and documents did not give fully convincing answers.

First of all, the composition of the Mothers' groups⁷ was studied as there are three such groups covering the project area formed by NRCS. The names of the groups based upon the different villages within the project area, are Upper Bangree, Sidheri and Arnakot Deurali, which cover 31, 50 and 110 households respectively. Normally one woman from each household joins the mother's group irrespective of caste and marital status however; daughters-in-law are more preferred for the membership compare to unmarried daughters

⁷Mother's group [Aama Samuha, in Nepali] is perhaps one of the most universalized traditional voluntary organizations in Nepal. It first started with the Gurungs of Western Nepal. Many INGOs and NGOs have formed and promoted mother's group across the country among different caste and ethnic groups' (Bhattachan, 2002).

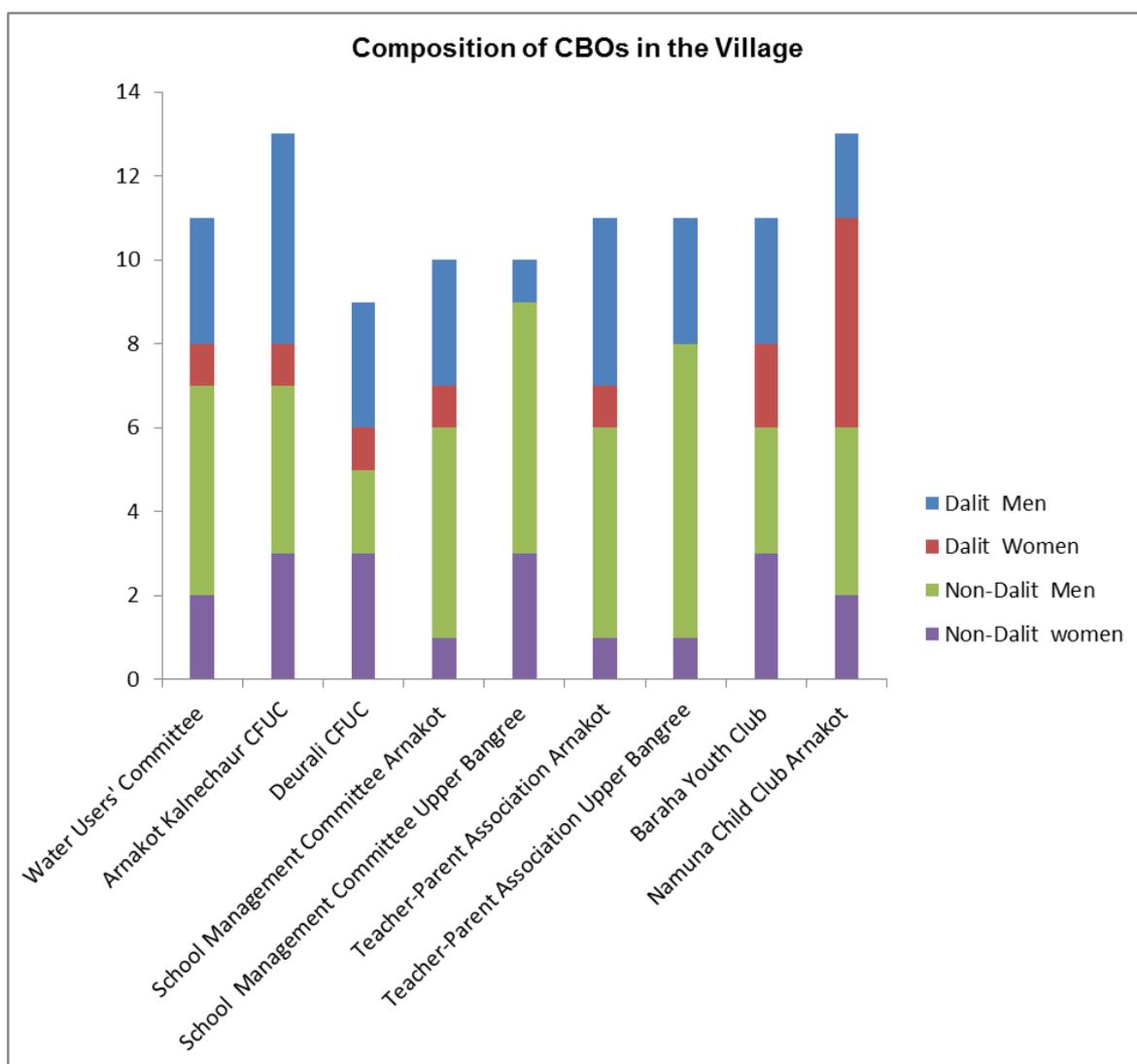
who could go way after marrying someone soon. Even though, 'mother's group' by definition sounds as only mothers are allowed to participate, but it came out that membership is flexible so that widow, separated, divorcees or single women who is not mother yet also could join the group.

Figure 3: Membership and Executive Committee of the Mothers' Group



Non-Dalit women are chairpersons in all three groups. Three out of 12 key posts (Chairperson, Vice chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) are assigned to Dalit women, including vice-chairperson in one group and vice-chairperson plus treasurer in another group. Out of three groups, Dalits are in the majority in the two based on the membership; however, they hold majority positions in one executive committee only. The presence of Dalit women is nil in one of the committees.

Figure 4: Composition of CBOs in the Village



The composition of nine different CBOs was studied in the research area to understand the community political roles of men and women. Six committees were steered by male non-Dalits and two committees were steered by male Dalits whereas one committee (Namuna Child Club Arnakot) was steered by a female Dalit chairperson.

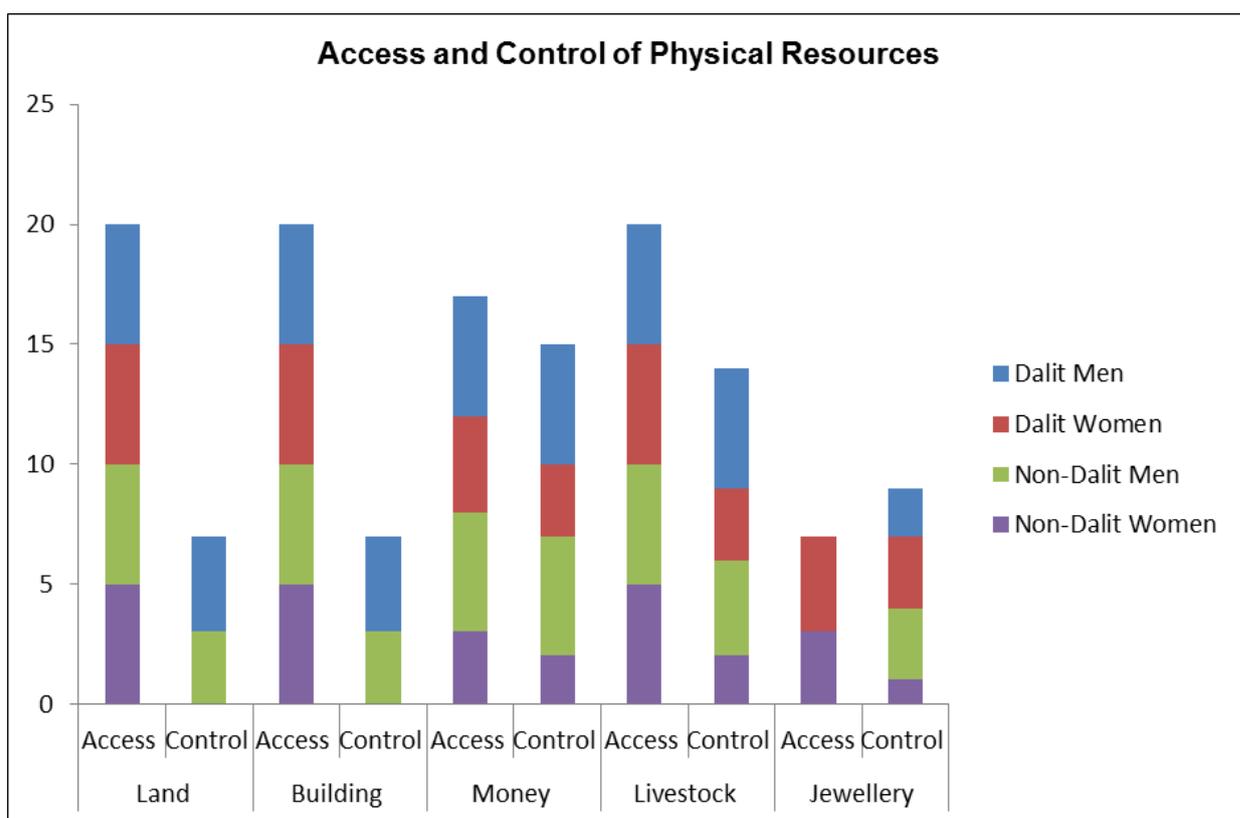
4.3 Access and Control

To verify the situation of access and control on resources and benefit, few themes were selected.

4.3.1 Physical Resources

To verify the situation of access and control on tangible resources, the indicators used were: land, building, money, livestock and jewellery. The results from the individual interviews are shown in figure 5.

Figure 5: Access and Control of Physical Resources



All women respondents from Dalit and non-Dalit caste group confirmed that they have access but no control of land and buildings. It also supported by all men respondents from the both caste group as they stated only men had control of these resources.

During the discussion in the men's group, one non-Dalit participant mentioned why he thinks women should not be possessed the fix properties such as land and building, as follows:

I do not see the point of registering land and buildings in woman's name. It would just make us [men] feel insecure. What if they [women] run away with another man?

Five women (two non-Dalits, three Dalits) had control over money and livestock whereas all ten women had access to livestock but only seven (three non-Dalits, four Dalits) women had access to money. Seven women (three non-Dalits, four Dalits) had access of gold-made jewellery whereas four women (one non-Dalit, three Dalits) had control also over it.

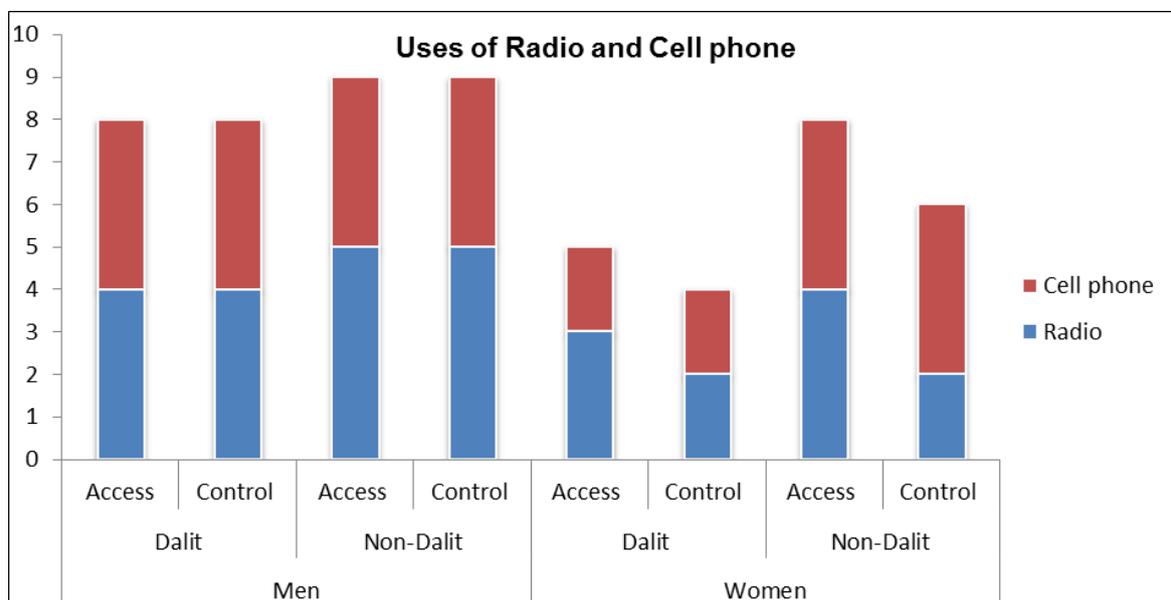
Seven men (three non-Dalits, four Dalits) had control over land and buildings. All men had access and control over money and access to livestock whereas nine men (four non-Dalits, five Dalits) had control over livestock. There was no access of gold-made jewellery for men hence five of them (three non-Dalit, two Dalit) had control over it.

4.3.2 Intangible Resources

To check the situation of access and control on intangible resources, the first question asked was about hours of sleep per night. 18 respondents (five non-Dalit women, five Dalit women, three non-Dalit men and five Dalit men) said that women in the household were the last to go to bed and the first to get up. According to the data they gave, the average time women spent in bed was six and half hours whereas men spent nearly eight hours. Two male respondents from the non-Dalit category mentioned that they did not notice time differences, for them both men and women had the same amount of rest in their home.

Another question about access and control was on connecting with the outside world by means of information. A question on the use of radios and cell phones in the personal domain was asked. The result is shown in figure 6.

Figure 6: Uses of Radio and Cell phone



Nine men (four Dalits, five non-Dalits) said they had access and control over radio and cell phone. One non-Dalit man stated that he has a radio but does not carry a cell phone whereas there are phones in the households where sons and daughters-in-law live.

Seven women (three Dalits, four non-Dalits) stated that they have access to radio and four women (two Dalits, two non-Dalits) stated that they had control over it as well. Six women (two Dalits, four non-Dalits) stated that they have access to and control over cell phones.

4.3.3 Credit Benefits and Educational Opportunities

Regarding access and control, another question was about benefits, such as loan facilities and current-day education.

When the question was asked about accessing credit facilities, all the Dalit and non-Dalit category male respondents indicated that they take out loans from informal settings in the village. A male respondent from the Dalit caste category stated as follows:

When I need a loan, I approach someone in the village who would trust me to repay. I have heard that loans from the bank and finance companies are softer, but I do not think that I can fulfil all the prerequisites to obtain the loan from them as they need a lot of proof and papers before they release loans. What is more, they are out of our reach.

Four women (two Dalit and two non-Dalits) confirmed that they have taken loans from the Mothers' group. One Dalit women stated the following:

It is easy to get small-scale loans from the mothers' group as we all know each other and the interest rate is also reasonable. That's why I have taken out a loan for goat raising.

All respondents stated that there were no cases of children staying at home and not attending school among those of school-going age irrespective of gender. This finding was tested in the focus groups and confirmed as true. However, they said that although all children attend primary school, many of them do not complete their education and leave the village at quite an early age to start earning money. It was also discussed in the focus groups that new generations are luckier to get that opportunity to be educated, which was not accessible until a few decades ago. However there was an agreement in the both discussions that the ADRWSS project has provided the opportunity of the non-formal classes for the elderly and adults who were not in school.

All the Dalit respondents stated that the special Dalit scholarship they have been receiving from the government were helpful buying notebooks pencils and uniforms even though the amount was often not sufficient. Some non-Dalit participants were voicing their concerns during the discussions, saying that they were not eligible for such scholarships even though they were poorer.

4.4 Decision-Making

4.4.1 Individual level

Questions were asked about taking decisions on travelling for more than a day. There were mainly two categories of answers that I received from the respondents. One was, they needed permission to travel and another was that permission was not necessary. In the case of permission needed, they had to approach their husband. For the male respondents it was not the case as they could decide themselves.

Table 8: Travel Permission

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Do not need permission to travel</i>	<i>Need permission to travel</i>
Dalit Men	5	0
Dalit Women	1	4
Non-Dalit Men	5	0
Non-Dalit Women	1	4

When another question was asked about the places they had visited in the past, nine out of ten men respondents (five Dalits and four non-Dalits) indicated that they had been at least once in a foreign country. One male respondent from the non-Dalit category mentioned that he had not been outside the country. When the same question was asked to women respondents, four women (two Dalit and two non-Dalits) stated that they were once in India with their husbands. Three women (one Dalit and two non-Dalits) stated that

they had some experience of travelling within the country with their husband. Three women (two Dalit and one non-Dalit) stated that they had never travelled beyond Burtibang so had no experience of sitting in a vehicle.

Table 9: Purchase of Cosmetics and Toiletries

Categories	Women buy for all	Women and men buy for their own
Dalit Men	4	1
Dalit Women	5	0
Non-Dalit Men	3	2
Non-Dalit Women	5	0

When the question was asked about buying cosmetics and toiletries for personal use (see table 9). All women indicated that they bought for members of the household, six (three Dalit and three non-Dalits) of them said that they had to let their husbands know about the expenses they made while four (two Dalit and two non-Dalit) stated that it was not necessary to do so. All men respondents said that they did not have to inform anybody about expenses.

4.4.2 Household level

Question of selecting crop type and species was asked first to understanding the decision-making at the household level. 17 respondents (five non-Dalit women, five Dalit women, three non-Dalit men and four Dalit men) stated that they do it in consensus in the household. Three male respondents (two non-Dalits and one Dalit) informed that they listen to their wives more in this matter.

Another question was about family planning. The following responses came to light on the family planning issue.

Table 10: Method of Family Planning

Categories	Neither discussed with spouse nor applied	I have done sterilization	My spouse has done sterilization	I am using contraceptives	My spouse is using contraceptives	I am scared to go for any
Dalit Men	4	1	0	0	0	0
Dalit Women	2	1	0	2	0	0
Non-Dalit Men	3	0	0	0	1	1
Non-Dalit Women	0	1	2	2	0	0

In all cases where respondents indicated that they used family planning (see Table 10), the husband had to decide which method to use and by whom.

There was also a discussion in a men's and women's group about the issues of family planning. During the discussion, participants admitted that the newer generations are more aware about family planning issues. One non-Dalit participant from the men's group stated as follows:

There was no radio in the early days, so people remained less aware about the possibilities of using contraceptives. Now, the new generation has more awareness however there is no major shift noticed in decision-making in this

matter as men are still taking the decisions about what shall be used and by whom.

In the women's group discussion, participants confirmed that the decision making still lies with the male partner about using contraceptives. One non-Dalit women said:

We know there are many types of contraceptives available nowadays. We have heard the pros and cons as well. Still we cannot decide ourselves which to choose, the male in the household decides that.

4.4.3 Community level

To find out about the decision-making process at community level, I observed the meeting of the Water Users' Committee (WUC) as this committee is instrumental for the realisation of the ADRWSS Project. It has legal recognition from the District Development Committee in Baglung and will be responsible for the sustainable use of drinking water once the project is phased out.

There are eight men (five non-Dalits, three Dalit) and three women (two non-Dalits, one Dalit) on the Water Users' Committee. Out of four key posts, chairperson and vice-chairperson are non-Dalit men while the secretary and treasurer are Dalit men.

The meeting which I observed, seven members were present including five men (two non-Dalits, three Dalits) and two women (one Dalit, one non-Dalit). Five other people (one woman and four men, caste was not known) participated, I was told by the chairperson that they were from the WUC advisory board thus no restriction for them to take part in such a meeting. However, the participation of quite a number of people from the advisory board at the meeting was rather confusing as it was difficult to work out who held the real power to influence decision-making.

Figure 7: Meeting of Water Users' Committee



The meeting was organised in one of the classrooms of the Arnakot Deurali Primary School. The chairperson announced the formal start of the meeting and the secretary floated the agendas, which included, opening a bank account for WUC and collecting the remaining repair funds from the water user households.

One woman (see Figure 7, seated next to the vice-chairperson, wearing a yellow glass bead necklace) shared the awkwardness of asking the villagers for the remaining money as there is no tangible progress taking place in terms of the activities of the drinking water project.

In response, the chairperson explained about the delay in the motor arriving, which in turn caused the delay of all the other activities so that progress is not visible yet. He suggested keeping people motivated, and to continue collecting sand and aggregate as agreed, so that once the motor had arrived in the village, after the monsoon, the construction work could take its own pace.

The treasurer mentioned that opening a bank account is necessary now, and according to the bylaws of the WUC, the account should be operated by the joint signature of the treasurer himself and either the chairperson or the secretary.

With respect to collecting the remaining amount, the chairperson suggested the deadline of mid-September. All the participants approved by nodding. My observation lasted 25 minutes although the meeting continued.

I had asked the project staff from NRCS, what his opinion was about the number of women and Dalits represented in the WUC, he stated as follows:

As an executing agency, we feel there is a low representation of women and Dalits in the water user committee. But this is the maximum we could manage at that point. Women were reluctant to join the committee and we thought we should focus more on empowering them through education and training and prepare them for the future (i.e. to join such committees), but at that moment, we could not force the community to include more women. And, the situation is similar for Dalits too; we first need to empower them.

When the same question was posed to the representative of Unica Foundation in Hoevelaken, the Netherlands, his email reply read as follows:

It must be within respect of the community. They selected these people as the most applicable for this job. Looking at the project it would not make real sense to force other people into the WUC then as selected by the community, as long as an acceptable number of women are included. For that I'm satisfied. Regarding caste, I realize I have not checked the composition related to the caste perspective yet.

4.5 Prevalence of Untouchability

Respondents were asked about the prevalence of untouchability in the village. Their answers are categorised in Table 11.

Table 11: Agreement with Statements regarding Untouchability

Categories	Acceptance Dalits' entry is restricted to the non- Dalits' houses	Minding untouchability		Experiencing discrimination	
		I do not mind eating and drinking together with Dalit and non-Dalit	I do mind eating and drinking together	I have felt discrimination in public places due to my caste	I have not felt discrimination in public places due to my caste
Dalit Men	5	5	0	2	3
Dalit Women	5	5	0	4	1
Non-Dalit Men	5	2	3	0	5
Non-Dalit Women	5	4	1	0	5

Public places denote the community resources such as the water spout, wells, resting places, etc. One Dalit women informed me that she has felt discrimination when she goes for *parma*⁸, especially while having lunch.

When I asked about the issue of untouchability to one of my key informants, who runs a programme at the local FM radio, Dalit Aawaz (voice of Dalit); he stated as follows:

There is discrimination against Dalits in most spheres of society. It happens mostly to a person who is illiterate and poor. I, myself, have not experienced such bitterness though; the reason is may be that I am capable and independent.

⁸mutual labour-sharing system

When I asked the representative from the child club, she was a Dalit; she mentioned that there are two women from the non-Dalit caste category in that locality who discriminate more. According to her, they always wanted to make sure that they were not touched by Dalit people, while they are walking or fetching water. If that happened, they would immediately run for a shower to 'clean' themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter offers discussion and analysis based on the result presenting in the previous chapter.

5.1 Gender Roles

The study revealed that the roles of men and women are visibly distinctive in Dalit as well as non-Dalit households in Arnakot Deurali village. As stated in Chapter 4.2.1, men's out-migration as well as less involvement in the household chores indicated that their productive roles are taking place outside the home. These findings support Moser (1993) where she states 'productive work tends to take place outside the home more often for men than for women and in general, women's productive work is often less visible and less valued than men's'. The wage variation for men and women was an issue of discussion among the participants in the FGDs as well. And it came out that women were getting paid disproportionately low compared to their male counterpart; only one third of the men's wages, which consistently supports Moser's argument that women's productive work has been valued less when compared to men. One might find these findings not so surprising. However, an organisation like Unica Foundation could better plan the project activities when it comes to men's and women's wages in the village.

Regarding the reproductive roles, all women respondents as well as five men (two non-Dalits, three Dalits) respondents stated that cooking, washing and cleaning were done by women solely. However, five men (three non-Dalits, two Dalits) stated that these tasks are done by both men and women. It is interesting to note that there were no women who talked about men's involvement in these tasks (Chapter 4.2.2). As a researcher, this has compelled me now to think upon the questions I posed; if they caused prestige bias for those men respondents due to their social status within the community and forced them to give the answer in order to look good? On the other hand, it is equally possible that those five respondents were genuinely involved in carrying out the above-mentioned tasks together with their wives due to their self-awareness on gender or other circumstances in the household. All possibilities are feasible, which leaves room for further in-depth research.

Respondents, and FGD participants as well as key informants all stated that both men and women have been performing different community roles free of charge, for example, the specific task of making and repairing pathways in the village. The women and men involved worked together with the men performing so-called heavy tasks where physical strength is vital, such as wall making, and breaking and removing stones, while the women focused on cleaning and removing bushes as an extension of their tasks of cleaning the house and kitchen gardening (Chapter 4.2.3). These findings support Moser (1993), where she states, 'women's community activities include provisioning and maintenance of resources, which are used by everyone, these activities are undertaken as an extension of their reproductive role and are normally unpaid and carried out in their free time'.

The study also revealed different roles for men and women in terms of helping neighbours by offering free labour during rituals. The typical example of helping neighbours to organise feasts was discussed and it explicitly came out that men were cooking on such occasions (Chapter 4.2.3). On the contrary women cook more at home (Chapter 4.2.2). In the men's group they said that men cooked because heavy pans had to be lifted and meals had to be prepared in larger quantities and that such tasks were not suitable for women. However, they admitted that women would do the dishes and fetch the water on such occasions. Does this change of role have to do with men's muscled to carry heavy

pans or is it the added value of cooking in a public place? This question remained unresolved.

While productive and reproductive gender roles were studied, the difference between Dalit and non-Dalit caste groups was found not to be so distinctive. However, there many distinctions were found in the community roles, and in decision-making at the community level:

When community political roles were examined, few aspects of men's and women's involvement came to the fore. Women were organised in the project area through three different mothers' groups (Figure 3). This platform provided women with the opportunity to gather once a month and run a small savings and credit programme within the group. The influences of these groups are fairly low in terms of raising women's issues at the community level. One example; none of the mothers' groups is represented in the Water Users' Committee officially. However, these group activities have eased women's lives somewhat by providing easy access to small loans, for example, but they do not empower women to challenge male domination. It seems that the group activities arranged by the project only serve the practical gender needs of women.

In the formation of the mother's groups, the issue of caste composition is also not attentively addressed (Figure 3). Although Dalit members outnumber non-Dalit members in two of the groups there is no Dalit chairperson in any of the groups. And their presence in the key posts (Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer) is also fairly low; they hold only three positions out of 12 in the three groups; Vice-chairperson and Treasurer in one group and Vice-chairperson in another. This phenomenon indicates the intersectional nature of exclusion. One could argue that this is not really exclusion since both Dalit and non-Dalit women are participating, but it is quite visible that the participation of Dalit women is reinforcing tokenism at the level of executive committees.

There are nine CBOs active in the community which are, in principle, gender and caste heterogeneous organisations (Figure 4). The chairpersons of six out of nine organisations are non-Dalit men including the water users' committee, school management committees and teacher-parent associations, which are considered to have relatively higher influence in the community. There are two Dalit men serving as chairpersons in one of the community forest users' committee and the youth club respectively, and, a Dalit girl serving as chairperson in the child club. This club is the only CBO of the nine where Dalit members outnumber non-Dalits and women outnumber men.

5.2 Access and Control

According to Williams et al (1994), 'power is vested in control over resources, such as land, equipment, other assets or labour, and over benefits, such as cash or political prestige. Women may have access to some of these resources, such as land but if they lack control over land they will be unable to assert their priorities for its use, and their access to the benefits of land cultivation will be restricted.' The findings of this study support this argument about access and control over land and building as women have access to these resources but no control (Figure 5). However, it showed no control of women over land officially, it came out that they could participate together with their husband for selecting crops types and species to be planted (Chapter 4.4.2), which indicates their some control.

The same figure (Figure 5) suggests that some women have control over money and livestock; this is mainly in the case where their husbands are abroad and they are ad-hoc head of the household. However, it shows that overall men have greater access and

control over resources. Although no men had access to gold-made jewellery they had some control over what jewellery their spouse was wearing.

It is interesting to note here that Dalit women have greater control over money and livestock (Figure 5) irrespective of the quantity of the resources they possessed (which was not part of the study). The possible reason is that two Dalit respondents were first wives but their husbands focused on their second wives. As their husbands were 'indifferent' towards them, they had control of their livestock and their earnings.

When access to and control over a radio and cell phone was studied, it transpired that non-Dalit men have greater access and control than Dalit men, non-Dalit women and Dalit women (Figure 6). Regarding accessing information, women lag behind somewhat compared to their male counterparts. However, they had some access to and control over a radio and cell phone as it transpired during the interview that their access to and control over a cell phone was established as it was arranged or sent to them by their husbands who were abroad; quite essential in establishing contact with the family back home. Some of them had radio-embedded cell phones so that they could tune into the programme of their choice.

It was a positive sign that all the children had access to education in the village however there was a high rate of dropouts before they reach in the high school (Chapter 4.3.3). The scholarship for Dalits children from the government was appreciated however poorer children from non-Dalit category could not enjoy the same facility due to the government policy. The non-formal education class organised by the project for illiterate youths and elderly was also the positive sign which helped them to be literate.

Regarding loans, it transpired that people were more likely to approach someone they knew in the neighbourhood than go to a bank or other agencies (Chapter 4.3.3). Several women were using the loan facilities from the mothers' group and were positive about it. There was no clear distinction between Dalit and non-Dalit caste group in this matter.

5.3 Gender Division of Labour and Access and Control

There are many factors influencing the gender division of labour and access and control in the village. These factors are decisive in shaping social relations and could guide Unica Foundation in the further planning and programming of certain projects or help to adjust current project activities. Understanding these factors helps in identifying appropriate inputs for different projects. Influencing factors can be many and wide-ranging but I have chosen some of the factors within the context of Arnakot Deurali village as I experienced them during my study by meeting people, talking to them and observing their activities. I have tried to encapsulate their impact, constraints and opportunities in a matrix which is presented in Annex II.

5.4 Decision-Making

Decision-making processes were in three spheres; individual, household and community decisions. Individual decision-making was examined by applying the indicator "travel". It transpired that most of the women have no decision-making powers regarding travelling (Table 8). This situation is identical for both Dalit and non-Dalit women. On being asked about how they travelled many women from both caste groups said they had the opportunity to travel but only if accompanied by their husband. If they could not go with their husband, their travelling chances would be very thin, said two Dalit and one non-Dalit women, who had never travelled beyond Burtibang and had never sat in a vehicle.

With respect to buying cosmetics and toiletries for private use, it was quickly clear that women mostly bought such articles for all the members of the household (Table 9). However they had to inform their husbands about the expenses they made. This shows that women do have some decision-making powers but that men ultimately act as the control mechanism.

Decision-making at the household level was examined by applying two indicators; crop selection and family planning. With regard to crop selection, it transpired that types and species of crops were mainly being selected by mutual consensus in both Dalit and non-Dalit households in the village.

When decision-making on family planning was studied it transpired that almost half of the respondents did not discuss the subject with their spouse and did not apply any method (Table 10). The level of awareness remained fairly low even among those who did engage in family planning. There is a case recorded during the fieldtrip where a non-Dalit woman was using contraceptives for the first time as suggested by her husband after giving birth to ten children (six daughters and four sons). Likewise, another case was recorded where a non-Dalit woman had her first baby when she was 16 years old. Now, at 21, she had two children and thinks her husband will get himself sterilized although she did not know for sure.

In all cases, men are making decisions about family planning, whether sterilization or the use of contraceptives. It was reported to me that men often made the decision themselves to opt for sterilization but heard of no cases where they used contraceptives; they would rather their wives went on the pill or took birth control injections.

As a researcher, the overall interaction on the issue of family planning was not an easy one. Women respondents were shy to share their experiences in individual interviews as it was like breaking taboo in their society. However, they were quite open during the group discussion which helped to shape up the data.

A meeting of the Water Users' Committee (WUC) was observed to understand the decision-making process at a community level. There were seven members present (two non-Dalit men, three Dalit men, one non-Dalit woman and one Dalit woman) out of 11. Five others (one woman and four men, caste not specified) had joined the meetings as representatives from the advisory board. The sitting arrangement of the meeting – a circle was formed – gave everyone equal status (Figure 7). The Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary were seated next to each other, which had a big impact on the group dynamics. The rest of the participants looked at this troika all the time. The chairperson announced the meeting and the treasurer introduced the agenda. The meeting went on in an informative way as the chairperson was giving useful information about project activities and the tasks to accomplish. There was no open invitation for discussion on the issue at stake, thus the majority of the participants remained silent. And, it was not clear at which point of time the decision was made. On many occasions I observed people talking to each other. Beside the troika, there was some contribution from the members of the advisory board in the discussion. Two women members (one Dalit and one non-Dalit) did not take part in the discussion; however, they nodded in agreement on various occasions.

The decision-making process at the community level did not come about through lively discussion. The few women present hardly spoke at all. Men from the Dalit caste group were better represented (two in key posts and one member) than the women from the same caste (only one member).

5.5 Issue of Untouchability

There is common agreement that the issue of untouchability prevails in the village. However, there are two opinions about the intensity (Table 11). During the discussion, it came out that the overall impression of the non-Dalit people was that 'the issue of untouchability is becoming more subtle'; on the contrary, the impression of the Dalit people about the issue differed as they thought 'it is still persistent'. Most of the non-Dalit people did not mind going to the home of a Dalit and eating together but they did not dare to invite a Dalit to do the same in their own home. There might be an issue of feeling observed by other non-Dalits as well as possible denial by the elderly at non-Dalit's home.

Experiences of being discriminated against due to caste were higher among Dalit women than their male counterparts (Table 11). I was told by a key informant (a Dalit male), who runs a radio programme for Dalits that according to him; 'the issue of discrimination is linked to education and career, which consequently help to shape the social status of a person'. He has no experience of being discriminated against and he thinks it is because of his social status. As a radio presenter he gets respect from people instead.

Dalit women had experienced more of being discriminated against compare to their male counterpart (Table 11) which indicates the intersectional nature of exclusion they are compelled to bear with.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter draws conclusions and offers some practical recommendations based on the findings of the study. In addition, this chapter indicates the main limitations and area for further research.

6.1 Conclusion

This study set out to determine men's and women's status in Arnakot Deurali village in relation to the predominant gender issues and to scrutinise the stipulated activities of the ADRWSS project as to whether, and to what extent, it met the different needs of men and women from the Dalit and non-Dalit caste groups in the village.

This study tried to look at gender roles reflected in three areas of village life; productive, reproductive and community. It also looked at access to and control over physical as well as intangible resources and benefits and the decision-making process at the individual, household and community level. Finally, it explored the intensity of the caste system in the village as manifested in the notion of untouchability.

What are the gender roles of men and women in the village?

This study revealed that men and women are associated with different roles shaped by social interaction. Subsistence agriculture (farming and animal rearing) was the predominant occupation in the community, therefore the roles of men and women also shaped accordingly.

In terms of productive roles, women are involved in planting weeding and harvesting whilst men are involved in ploughing and levelling the field. There are some tasks done by both, men and women such as carrying compost, carrying crops etc. The study also showed that own production was not sufficient to feed the household throughout the year for most of the respondents, thus men were inclined to leave home to search for menial labour abroad, especially in the Indian state of Punjab, Malaysia and the Gulf states.

This study also revealed the different roles of men and women in the household. Women seemed to be involved in most of the household chores, including cleaning, cooking, and washing. Men tended to take care of the cattle, milking and feeding them as well as carrying out repair and maintenance work, such as roof maintenance of the house. There were a few tasks that men and women performed them collectively, such as water fetching and firewood collection. Women's more involvement in such a household chores has allowed men to travel in country or abroad for searching jobs.

At the community level voluntary work was provided by both men and women equally although there was a division of labour.

Women's roles were less physically demanding whilst men were taking on the tasks where strength was required. This supported the notion of masculinity and femininity which we generally accept. Regarding the tasks undertaken by the women, they were, to a great extent, an extension of the household chores, except for the fact that women did not take the role of cook during feasts at the community level. This became the men's task.

The involvement of women and men in different community-based organisations was also visible. Women's involvement in the mothers' group had an impact on their saving habit

and offered them loan facilities when needed. But the influence of those groups in the community was fairly low and women's issues were compartmentalised even in a gendered line of thought.

The intersectional nature of exclusion was visible even within the mothers' group as Dalit women did not hold substantial positions on the executive committees despite their strong participation at membership level.

The study showed the low participation of women (Dalit and non-Dalit) in the active CBOs of the village. Non-Dalit men had an influential hold in such organisations. This phenomenon serves to reinforce the men's domination and women's subordination in the community, which also has direct effects on the status of women's life as their voice remains unheard.

In the case of Dalit caste group, the caste based labour division was not strongly appeared in this study as all of them were involved in agriculture. This is interesting to see in other villages where Dalit household are quite a few compare to non-Dalit if Dalits are more confined as tailors, cobblers and blacksmiths in such villages.

The roles of men and women are quite gendered irrespective of the caste in the Arnakot Deurali village. These stereotypical roles are confining women to the household and letting them do the domestic chores, nurturing children as well as assisting husband in the agricultural field and animal husbandry only. The contribution of women in economic perspective is not acknowledged even though they keep working harder. Likewise, Dalits are left behind especially in the community politics roles, their involvement and influence is fairly low in such institutions.

What is the position of men and women regarding access to, and control over resources and benefits?

The study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of access to and control over resources and benefits for men and women. Men had a greater control over physical resources, such as land and buildings whereas women had only access and no control to these resources. However, women had some access to and control over livestock and money; control was greater if a woman was the head of the household. Men had no access to but still some control over gold and jewellery. However, only women had access to jewels as they wore them all the time.

The study also revealed the access to and control over time, information and educational opportunities as valuable other resources. Regarding time, it was discovered that women slept less than men. Regarding the use of a radio and cell phone, non-Dalit men had highest access to and control over these items. However, to some extent, non-Dalit women also had access to and control over these items as their husbands had arranged radio-embedded cell phones from abroad. For Dalit women, access to and control over a radio and cell phone was relatively low compared to the other categories.

Men had access to credit facilities mainly from the informal sector, such as neighbours or well-off persons in the village. Women had access to loan from the mothers' group but control of such loans was with their husband in most of cases. The interest rate of the loan was lower in the mothers' group compared to other informal sectors. Getting credit facilities from banks was not practiced due to the bureaucratic chaos as well as geographical distance.

Educational opportunities were available for all children in the two primary schools in the village. Dalit students were getting scholarships from the government, which they were using to buy stationery and uniforms. Initially, at primary level, children started off by going to school but the dropout rate was high by the time the children had reached secondary level as they tended to look for earning opportunities while the nearest secondary school was quite far from the village. Adults received some informal classes under the project, which enabled them to become literate in basic Nepali.

To summarise, men in the village have greater access and control over almost all resources which reinforce their position and social status higher than women and help maintaining the male's domination long-lasting. This phenomenon is equally pervasive in Dalit and non-Dalit caste group.

How do men and women take part in decision-making in individual, household and community level?

This study also explores men and women's participation and influence in making decisions in the different spheres.

At the individual level, women were not allowed to travel alone especially when they had to stay overnight unless their husband or someone else from the family accompanied them. However, men were free to travel. There were women who went to different states of India to join their husbands and help them there. However, there were some women who had never had the chance to travel or to experience riding in vehicle.

Women were buying cosmetics and toiletries for themselves as well as for the rest of the members of the household. They could decide themselves; however, most of them had to inform their husband about the expense they made.

Women and men decided together which types and species of crops to plant. So this suggests women's partial control over land although it is far from possessing the land.

Regarding family planning issues, men were mainly taking the decisions on which means to use. However, it also transpired that half the respondents did not discuss the issue with their spouse or employ any forms of family planning. Against this background a few cases of large families and teenage pregnancies were reported during the individual interviews however, this information is limited enough to make it generic.

Judging from observing a meeting of the WUC at community level decision-making processes seem to be gendered. There was no conducive atmosphere for women to speak out as they were under-represented so cornered in the group dynamics.

To what extent does the issue of untouchability prevail in the village?

This study revealed that the village has long-standing practices bound up with the caste system, thus the prevalence of untouchability was one of the major phenomenon of the system. All respondents unanimously agreed that there is an entry restriction for Dalit people in non-Dalit houses. However, a few cases were recorded where non-Dalits stated that they would not mind eating together with Dalits. On the other hand, there were enough people in the non-Dalit caste group who were really concerned about untouchability and did not want to be 'polluted' by eating together with Dalit people. The experiences of being discriminated against are persistent among the Dalit caste group. This phenomenon is even stronger among women Dalit compared to Dalit men.

6.2 Recommendations

In line with the Nepali inclusion policies and PRSP, it is necessary to decrease gender and caste inequalities such as highlighted in this study. Efforts to do so should include all gender and caste groups themselves. And we should be clear on the fact that these long-standing and culturally ingrained phenomena are not going to be resolved quickly. However, NGO, such as Unica Foundation could come up with an intervention strategy which would not harm the societal integration, peace and harmony yet could mitigate the gaps caused by gender and caste issues.

The active participation of women, men, girls and boys from all caste groups is the most needed to bring any endeavours to success. Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made.

- The issues of caste should be sensitized within the mothers' group and Dalit women should be encouraged to take part in leading positions to make the mothers' group inclusive. In doing so, the role models from Dalit community (such as radio the presenter) could be introduced in the mother's group meeting and let him share his experiences. Likewise, the result of this research could be presented to the people and turn into a workshop in a playful way.
- The official representation of the mothers' group in the CBOs should be established. Specially, in the water users' committee, community forest user's committees and school management committees, where women's concern and issues are explicitly involved. In addition, an effort should be made to make such CBOs inclusive in terms of gender and caste. The access of women and Dalit people in the decision-making should be ensured by allowing access in the key posts to them.
- There should be gender and caste awareness training provided to men and women from all caste group collectively. It is important to include men and non-Dalits also in such training programme to acknowledge their crucial roles for mitigating gaps caused by gender and caste issues in the society. In addition, it is equally important to give them secure feelings so that they do not feel threatened so do not resist.
- The issue of untouchability should be tackled by providing opportunities to Dalits for their personal and professional development. Existing activities which are helping to smooth away caste differences should be acknowledged and promoted, such as cases of inter caste marriages, young people's inclination to drink and eat with Dalit people, for example.
- All interventions should be linked with local and district government's activities to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives even after phasing out some projects.
- This research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation, such as:
 - ❖ Intra-caste group dynamics in a Dalit as well as a non-Dalit community,
 - ❖ Issues of migration and its impact on men and women,
 - ❖ Trends among the younger population of this area,
 - ❖ Polygamy practices in the village,
 - ❖ Cases of inter-caste marriages and societal response,
 - ❖ Declining of caste based labour division in the village.

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APPENDIXES

Annex I: Checklist for Semi-structured Interview

Study identification: Ramesh Paudyal (2012)	
Guidance topic: Status of men and women	
Name and sex of respondent:	
Dalits	Non-Dalits
Checklist completed by:	Date and time:

Opening up, general introduction, formal exchange about family, home location etc.

(A) Key research question/aim: To understand the gender roles

1. Income generating activities (Productive roles)
 - Your income generating activities (Steady job, self-employment, daily labour work in own farm / other's farm)
 - Chief earner at the family
 - Your fe(male) counterpart's work
 - If you like that work
 - Your supportive role in productive activities (e.g. as farmer's wife/husband or so on)
2. Household work (Reproductive roles) (Who, when how gets involve)
 - Water fetching
 - Firewood collecting
 - Cooking
 - Cleaning
 - Taking care of children
 - Taking care of elderly
3. Community managing / labour contribution in societal rituals
 - Labour contribution (unpaid) to make community building, school, pathways
 - Labour contribution on cultural rituals in the neighbourhood, e.g. weeding and death ceremonies, feasts
4. Community politics / involvement in the political and other interest group
Involvement in the group and committees, e.g. forest user's group, mothers' group, school management committee and political parties at the different level

(B) Key research question/aim: To understand access and control situation of physical resources and benefits

Access and Control: Economic / physical resources

	how was it possessed			Selling		Taking care	Remarks
	By inheritance	By buying	Gift received	Decide to sale	Reason		
Jewellery							
Livestock							
Money							
Land							
Building							
Equipment							

Access and control on intangible resources:

Time:

Morning and evening work,

Daytime work,

Time to go to bed

Time to out of the bed

Information:

FM radio,

Cell phone

Opportunity to participate in the community meeting while the invitation is open for fe(male)

Access and control on Benefits

Loan:

How to access

Providers - Interest groups, mothers 'group, cooperatives, banks

Procedures – necessary documents, collator

How easy / difficult to get load

Payback policies

Education:

Access

Formal and non-formal education

Affordability

(C) Taking part in Decision-making

Taking part in the decision-making at the personal level

Individual autonomy

Physical mobility- Travelling, overnight stay outside home

Personal expenses

Buying – cosmetics, toiletries

Taking part in the decision making at the household level

Productive expenses

Deciding crop types and species to cultivate

Family planning

Using contraceptives (permanent, temporary and types), who decides which one to choose, who brings / arranges it

Child schooling

Decision of sending child in the school

Decision of sending child in particular school

Annex II: Influencing Factors on Gender Division of Labour, Access and Control

Influencing factors	Impact	Constraints	Opportunities
Political	Men's hegemony; Women's issues is not addressed adequately	Low participation of women; Tokenism	Women's political awareness on the rise
Demographic	Scattered settlement High birth-rate Male out-migration	Difficult to access basic utilities, e.g. drinking water Continuous childbirth causing women's health deterioration Women are left behind and forced to perform both gender roles	Balance mixed settlement of Dalit and Non-Dalit people; Women outnumber men in the village;
Economic	Subsistence based farming Less economic activities Market distance No property in women's name	Women's roles are less valued in farming No employment opportunities in the village Women remain the dispossessed throughout their lives	Unexploited natural resources; Possibilities to explore new types of highland crops and livestock Possibilities of tourism development
Cultural	Non-egalitarian Hindu religion Son preference	Gendered mind-set Gender stereotypes Women are suppressed	Newer generation is more open on the issue of religion, women; Women are getting united
Educational	School is available, accessible and affordable for all	Not enough teachers Poor physical infrastructure Dropout rate is high	Self-awareness re. education
Environmental	Highland Low rainfall	Low yield, water issues	Fresh air No noise and dust
Legal	Inaccessible legal entities	Difficult to approach police and court Low awareness among women on the legal issues and remedy	Mothers' groups are organised and discuss women's issue at local level
Caste system	Prevalence of untouchability	So- called Dalits are restricted from socializing with the so- called non-Dalits Disadvantaged Dalit women are more discriminated against	Gradually the orthodox nature of caste system is becoming more subtle Some cases of inter-caste marriages recorded

Annex III: Notes from Reflective Journal

This account describes how I felt while going through the entire process of research. My supervisor suggested I should keep a reflective journal from the beginning of the research process. I liked the idea and therefore started making key notes about incidents I thought to be important.

Topic Selection

While I was planning to undertake this research project, I had struggled to choose a topic which would be relevant for my study and of interest to me as well. At the beginning I considered women's empowerment and tried to make an initial proposal. After several discussions with my supervisor, I came to the conclusion that this topic would simply be too vague and that I would not be able to grasp the whole scenario of empowerment in the stipulated time. Then I decided to focus on this topic which is more straightforward and clear-cut; to check the current status of men and women in Dalit and Non-Dalit - caste groups. Regarding the research location, there was an understanding from the beginning that I would choose Arnakot Deurali village in the Baglung district in Nepal. Hence, this was not a complete coincidence as I was going to work for Stichting Unica in Nepal from November this year anyway and this village was the project area of one of the on-going projects of Unica, Arnakot Deurali Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (ADRWSS) Project so naturally it was of interest to me.

Theory and Feedback

As a point of entry to my research I decided to take Moser's theory on gender roles, access and control and decision making and caste issues were also incorporated since the project area was a mixed settlement of Dalit and non-Dalit people. While I was developing my research proposal, I would discuss with my fellow classmates and seek their feedback. I got mainly two types of feedback the first was that they found my topic quite classical, that there was nothing new in it and people would know already about the findings, such as women work longer hours than men, women have less control on resources and do not participate in the decision - making process etcetera. The second feedback was; my topic is still broad and there is a lot more to cover, which would be almost impossible even to touch upon in such a short period of time. Both opinions were always in my mind during the entire research period. And, I must admit that they pushed me to think back and forth and to constantly check whether I was falling into the pitfalls they had pointed out while collecting and analysing data.

The Fieldtrip

I reached home in Kathmandu in mid-July and it was great to see my wife and, son and the rest of the family members after 10 months. I spent a couple of days with them and prepared to go to the village. My practical challenge appeared when I started my journey from Kathmandu to the field. The first part was the easiest, half an hour flight to Pokhara and three hours' drive to Baglung headquarters. Then there were 92 kilometres of off-road terrain to negotiate from Baglung to Burtibang. In Holland or somewhere else in Europe, it would perhaps take about one hour or two; but no one knew how long time it would take as it all depended on the road conditions and landslides on the way. A few four-wheel jeeps were available on queue but the departure time was not fixed. My chosen vehicle had a capacity of eight or 10 people officially but they easily squeeze in up to 16 people at once. And, all 15 passengers had to wait until the last one showed up as the driver won't move the jeep until its 'full'. We drove until we reached the first landslide and then had to



Snapshot while crossing one of the quicksands caused by the landslide.

get out and walk across which was not very safe either. I must admit I started regretting my choice of travel and the risks involved. However I was lucky enough; one of my fellow travellers injured his leg while crossing the quicksand caused by the landslide.

I managed to reach Burtibang in 11 hours after changing jeeps three times at different intersections. It was just a coincidence to have a number of jeeps in each intersection, as I was told by the locals that the presence of the jeeps depended on the landslides and swollen rivers. The fuel for the jeep is transported by other jeeps in the petrol cans and porters were available to bring those cans to the other side of the river or landslides.

The next morning I started a stiff climb up to the hill of Arnakot Deurali, it was an upward walk for four hours. Despite the pains and blisters, I felt happy to arrive in the village because it was so fresh and people were really nice and hospitable. (I did not hear many complaints from people about the road and the remoteness of the region and I realized that it was perhaps just me, finding this journey so tough; while the villagers have already accepted the reality.

The Logistics

My food and accommodation was arranged at the headmaster's home in Arnakot. I ate with the family; I had roti in the morning; rice, lentil and potatoes in the afternoon and rice, lentil and chicken in the evening meal. I was offered homemade millet wine every day before the evening meal. For one night I moved to another house in the next village as I had to meet a few participants there too.

I spent five days in the village. By the end of my fieldwork, I had become familiar with many of the villagers. They somehow knew that I might be visiting them in the future due to my probable engagement with Unica Foundation. They organised a small farewell for me, which was thoughtful.

Annex V: Photo Gallery



An interview with a Non-Dalit woman



An interview with a Dalit woman



Men's group discussion



Women's group discussion



Arnakot Deurali village



Sidheri village



One of the landslides on the way to Arnakot Deurali



Upper Bangree village



Children are on the way to home after having coaching classes at Arnakot Primary School



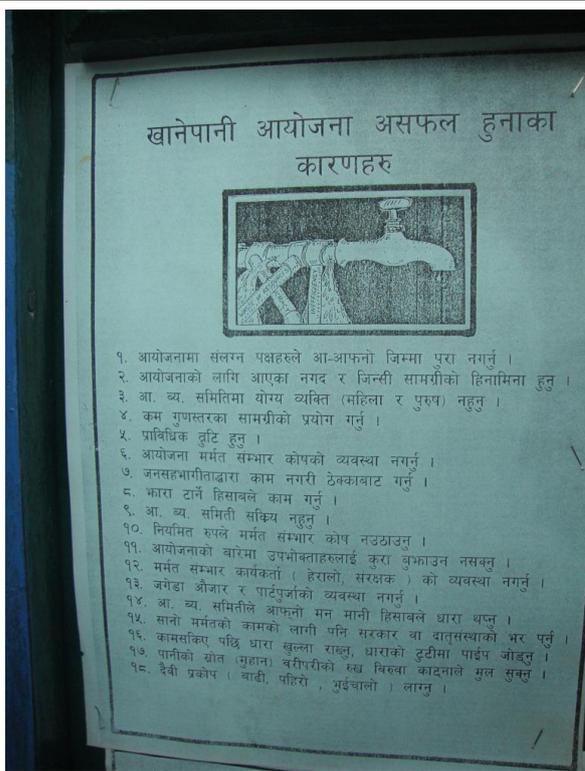
A downward view from upper Bangree



A view of Burtibang valley



A snapshot from the topmost plateau of Arnakot Deurali



Poster on the wall of WUC office, which reads, 'reasons of getting drinking water project fail'



A toilet block constructed by project but not used yet due to the lack of water



A woman going back home after collecting grasses in Hatiya Galkot village



A scene of paddy cultivation being done in Kharbang village